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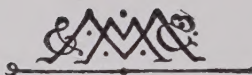
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THE STORY OF JOB



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THE STORY OF JOB

A SYMPATHETIC STUDY OF THE
BOOK OF JOB IN THE LIGHT OF
HISTORY AND LITERATURE

BY THE

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"ECCLESIASTES; OR, THE CONFESSIONS OF AN ADVENTUROUS SOUL,"

"THE RELIGION OF THE BEATITUDES"

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FOREWORD

THIS is not a commentary, but the sympathetic study of an experience, not intended for scholars, but for the general reader. The Book of Job should be read in the Revised Version, which is embodied in this story; and I desire to express my thanks to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press at Oxford and the Syndics of the University Press at Cambridge for permission to use that version. Those who are interested in critical questions are referred to the Appendix.

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SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

I

THE PROLOGUE (CHAPS. I., II.)

THE situation of a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.
The insinuation of the Satan: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" Job's trials and resignation.

II

The arrival of the three friends of Job (ii. 1-11). The fellowship of silence, and Job's cry (iii.).

III

The discussion between Job and his friends in three sets of speeches:

- (a) The friends, whilst recognising Job's religious character, think that the temper in which he is bearing his trouble is unbecoming to a religious man (iv.-xiv.).
- (b) The breach between them widens. The friends are shocked by Job's outspoken criticism of God's ways, and suspect some great sin as the cause of his trouble (xv.-xxi.).
- (c) Finally, exasperated by the tone of his replies, they all reach the same conclusion that Job is a great sinner (xxii.-xxvii.).

During the debate with his friends Job protests his innocence, and appeals from man to God.

IV

The conclusion is reached that the secret of Divine wisdom is hidden from man, whose only wisdom is to fear God (xxviii.). Job, finally, surveys all his circumstances, takes a regretful retrospect of his past happiness, and, contrasting it with his present condition, solemnly repudiates the knowledge of any sin that would account for the difference (xxix.-xxxi.).

V

The entrance of Elihu, who makes his own contribution to the problem by showing that suffering may be an instrument of education in God's hands (xxxii.-xxxvii.).

VI

The Divine answer out of the storm is a revelation of the power and tenderness of God, which humbles Job whilst it satisfies him that his sufferings have their place in the inscrutable purpose of a greater wisdom than his own (xxxviii.-xli.).

VII

THE EPILOGUE (CHAP. XLII.)

The restoration of Job.

INTRODUCTION

A noble Book ; all men's Book ! . . . grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity ; in its epic melody and repose of reconciliation . . . sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation ; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind ; so soft and great ; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars.—
CARLYLE : *The Hero as Prophet*.

A FINE degree of feeling is required to judge the value of any book which is not only a contribution to literature, but a human document, and no part of the Bible requires more sympathetic reading than the Book of Job. Many interpreters have failed through lack of this perception. Matthew Arnold has recorded his deliverance from the influence of a teacher who was the incarnation of sanity and commonsense—the imperturbable Benjamin Franklin.¹ Conceiving a new version of the Book of Job, Franklin gave a sample of the style he would recommend by retranslating the famous verse, “Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, ‘Doth Job fear God for nought?’” This became in Franklin’s hands : Does your Majesty imagine that Job’s good conduct is the effect of mere personal attachment and affection ? I well remember, says Arnold, how, when I first read that, I drew a deep breath of relief, and said to myself, “After all there is a stretch of humanity beyond Franklin’s victorious good sense.”

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter i.

It is difficult to translate the Book of Job into prosaic language without the gift of imagination. He would be a poet, says Thoreau, who could impress the winds and streams into his service to speak for him. This the author of the Book of Job has done, and it is not surprising to find that the poets often take the first place among its interpreters. Milton is the poet who has most absorbed Job in his writings; Ruskin has, perhaps, best appreciated its grand symphonies of Nature; and William Blake has achieved the highest flight of imagination in those engravings in which he has "matched himself against his text and translated its sharp and profound harmonies into a music of design not less adorable."¹

I.

The problem of pain has survived all attempts to solve it. John Stuart Mill declared² that an omnipotent God would contrive that each person's share of suffering would be exactly proportioned to his deserts, but such a statement ignores the organic unity of our life, which makes us members of one another. We mysteriously suffer and rejoice together. Even when we have discovered the close connection between sin and suffering, and recognise that law of vicarious sacrifice which pervades all the kingdoms of Nature, the mystery still remains

¹ Swinburne, *William Blake*. Whilst the Job-frescoes of a disciple of Giotto, in the Campo Santo of Pisa, are fading under the influence of time, the twenty-one engravings by Blake on the Book of Job are imperishable. But there is more of Blake than of Job in his interpretation of the book, and those who seek the Blakean point of view should read *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job* (Wicksteed).

² *Essays on Religion*, "Nature."

in that amount of suffering which seems to serve no purpose. It is a problem for faith. Yet, as we listen to some voices in ancient and modern times, we realise that no age has to wrestle with it as though it had never been faced before. Words of consolation and hope tell us that men have not suffered in vain. "Though he slay me, yet shall I wait for him."¹ "Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!"² We hear this testimony corroborated in modern times: "The whole mystery of pain has been unravelling itself to my heart gradually, and now that I have got a clue, the worse than Cretan labyrinth turns out to be a harmonious and beautiful arrangement. Pain has long ceased to be an unintelligible mystery to me. . . . Goodness is better than happiness; and if pain be the minister of goodness, I can see that it is a proof of love to debar happiness."³

Human philosophy has perhaps said the last word in this hopeful strain in the saying: "There is nothing the body suffers that the soul may not profit by."⁴ The problem still remains, but we cannot imagine our world without it. When we think of life without pain we create an unreal world—that world Robert Browning called "Rephan,"⁵

¹ Job xiii. 15.

² Hab. iii. 17.

³ F. W. Robertson, *Life and Letters* (Stopford Brooke): Letter LIX.

⁴ George Meredith, *Diana of the Crossways*, chapter xlii.

⁵ See *Robert Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher* (Henry Jones), chapter viii.

where life stands still through eternity, without a want and without growth, where "good" has no better or best. Struggle and pain are the inevitable conditions of all progressive life, and if we can believe that no pain is meaningless, that all pain may serve some moral purpose, we may even come to see with another thinker that

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows,
 Like harmony in music ; there is a dark
 Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
 Discordant elements, makes them cling together
 In one society. How strange that all
 The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
 Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, interfused
 Within my mind should e'er have borne a part,
 And that a needful part, in making up
 The calm existence that is mine when I
 Am worthy of myself !¹

II.

Was Job a real character? Among the Jews in early times, the book appears to have been considered strictly historical, but with later Jewish writers, it was, to some extent, an open question. Outside the book itself, Job is only mentioned in the Old Testament by Ezekiel,² and this is evidently not a reference to the book, but to the tradition regarding its hero. It suggests that his fame for piety was celebrated. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it" (*i.e.*, Judah), says Ezekiel, "they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." A mere name could not be handed down without some story attached to it, and we may safely assume that the outline of the tradition of Job's unparalleled

¹ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book First.

² Ezek. xiv. 14.

prosperity and affliction existed in some form. The literature of the Old Testament always has a practical object in view. It does not discuss theories of Providence in an abstract way, but appeals to real life to "point a moral and adorn a tale." Those who were familiar with the story of Job could say what the Apostle James said in a later day: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job."¹ I hold the Book of Job to be real history, said Martin Luther, but that everything so happened and was so done I do not believe, but think that some ingenious, pious, and learned man composed it.² The modern view is that the book rests on an historical tradition which the author has used and embellished for moral instruction; yet if ever a book revealed a man, the beatings of a warm human heart, it is in this story of Job. It is one of those great dramas of the soul which, like the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, the *Divine Comedy*, *King Lear*, Goethe's *Faust*, prove that the fountains of life and passion are not in any outward forms but within. Job's witness to truth might be expressed in the language of the Psalmist:³ "O come hither, and hearken, all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

III.

How are we to account for the literary form of the book? When we have said that the Prologue and Epilogue are in prose, and the rest in poetical form, we may go on to discuss whether it is a drama or an epic poem, but we shall not meet with any

¹ Jas. v. 11.

² *Table Talk*.

³ Ps. lxvi. 14; xxxiv. 6.

agreement on the subject. It evades all labels and fits into no scheme. "It is itself," says one of its most luminous interpreters,¹ and that is probably the last word on the subject; but we may still ask why the author devoted so much art to his work. When James Hinton gave his message to the sorrowful in *The Mystery of Pain*, he wrote from a wide experience, out of a full heart, without adopting any literary device to commend his teaching. When Joseph Henry Shorthouse wrote *John Inglesant* he had the materials of a philosophy which he thought might best be expressed in the form of a philosophical romance, and he sought to combine philosophy with real life in such a way as to make a story express some of the most serious thoughts which have stirred the heart of man. In making the attempt he ventured to criticise his brother author. "If James Hinton had thrown *The Mystery of Pain* into the form of story, do you not think that for one sorrowing heart to which his message has brought peace and salvation he might have reckoned thousands?"² It is in this way we must account for the form of the Book of Job.

This *Mystery of Pain* is a philosophy cast into readable form in order to make a universal appeal. The author has no thought of literary renown, and is content to be anonymous. He is not concerned with any theory to which an epic poem, a drama, a tragedy, or comedy should conform; and it is nothing to him that he spoils the artistic effect of his work by disclosing beforehand the real cause of Job's affliction. His one idea is to inspire his fellow-men with hope and courage to bear the mystery of life

¹ Peake.

² Preface to *John Inglesant*.

by watching the varying moods of a great soul struggling with a tragic situation and rising above it; and to do this he devotes all the resources of a richly cultivated mind, producing a work which has been called "the climax and crown of Hebrew wisdom literature." But the interest is always more human than literary. The style of the writer cannot conceal the human note which expresses one of the intensest utterances wrung from the heart of man. The author must have experienced something of the disillusionment, the humiliation, the haunting fear, the heroic faith which tradition had associated with the name of Job. Coleridge has said that John Milton took this book as his model for the general scheme of *Paradise Regained*,¹ but we find far more human interest in his *Samson Agonistes*, which seems to fulfil the three conditions under which the Book of Job was written: a vivid sense of the past, re-lived through painful experience, expressed in dramatic form.

In *Samson Agonistes* we hear a human voice blending with the sorrows of the seventeenth century. It is of little consequence that the incidents of Samson's life do not form a strict parallel to those of Milton. The basis of reality is there. Both represent the record of a human soul overcome by adversity, yet strong in the conviction of the righteousness of his cause. Milton simply fitted his own experience into the historic framework of Samson's tragedy. The glorious youth of Milton, his first marriage with a woman out of sympathy with him, his blindness, and the apparent defeat of his most cherished principles, find a true resem-

¹ *Lectures on the Poets*. The references to Job in *Paradise Regained* are: I. 368-370, 424-426; III. 64-67.

blance in the older story, and make the new version a reaffirmation of the old faith.

All is best, though we oft doubt,
What the unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.¹

It was in this way that an unknown writer, living in a period of history which taxed all the resources of faith in the reflective Jew, wrote the story of Job to comfort his fellow-men and "justify the ways of God to man." The man who speaks to us through this book is very human. He is a Jew, with a stubborn reliance upon the religious experience of the race, even if it did not confirm his own. But the land of Uz has no national boundaries. It is wherever in the wide world man struggles to reconcile faith in God with the anomalies of life. The book breathes brotherly love to all mankind. What powers of satire the author possesses are seen in the pungent scorn poured on human sophistry and the revelation of Divine irony in the answer out of the storm, but satire never becomes cynicism. If there is humour in the book, a real sense of the incongruous, it is due to that comic perception which detects the ridiculous in those we love without loving them less, which laughs with a laugh that clears the heart as thunder clears the air.²

IV.

The Book of Job has its place in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.³ Wisdom covers a wide range of

¹ *Samson Agonistes*.

² See *An Essay on Comedy* (George Meredith).

³ The wisdom literature also includes the apocryphal books, The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus.

meaning: the knowledge of Solomon, who spake three thousand proverbs . . . and of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall;¹ the craftsmanship of Bezaleel;² the sphere of law and civil government;³ and even the arts of husbandry⁴ were all covered under the comprehensive name of wisdom. But the chief domain of Hebrew wisdom was in the sphere of practical morality, for the wise men of Israel applied the law of the priest and the teaching of the prophet to the actual conduct of life.

Whilst to the Greek, wisdom might be nothing more than cleverness, and folly another name for stupidity, Hebrew wisdom does not make intellectual but moral distinctions. No man in the Bible is despised because he is simply dull. Even Nabal,⁵ the churl (fool by name and nature), is not condemned merely for his churlishness, but for his evil character. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." This invariable moral judgment is the distinction of Hebrew wisdom. The wise men of Israel, though overshadowed by prophet, priest, and king, took a conspicuous part in the education of the Jewish race, and their reputation was fully established in the time of the prophet Jeremiah: "The law shall not depart from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet."⁶ The wise men were educated in the same school as the prophets, and absorbed their moral teaching; but when the succession of prophets began to fail, when Israel ceased to enjoy political freedom, then the wise men came into their own

¹ 1 Kings iv. 32-33.

³ Prov. viii. 15.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxv. 3.

² Exod. xxxi. 3.

⁴ Isa. xxviii. 29.

⁶ Jer. xviii. 18; born c. 650 B.C.

distinct sphere of influence. As the shadow of trouble gathered over the nation, culminating in the deep gloom of the exile, the wisdom of Israel tended to become more speculative and critical, and it cannot be denied that their wise men sometimes came so perilously near losing their way in wrestling with the problems of life that it brought them into collision with the prophets,¹ even though their interests and teaching were radically the same. There were special causes for this friction, due to differences of temper and outlook. The prophets were patriotic, passionate in the assertion of established truth, ever combating idolatries, building all their hopes on the ultimate fulfilment of Israel's destiny and the vindication of God in history. The wise men are less national, more human and universal in their sympathies. They do not lay any foundations, but feel beneath them the great commonplaces of moral reward and retribution which actually work themselves out in the experience of men.² They are not visionaries and dreamers of good, but shrewd, observing, and quiet in the possession of what seem to be established principles. It was in dark days, when the problems of life pressed heavily upon all thoughtful people, that some of these wise men stand out by themselves and make a new challenge to faith: Why do the innocent suffer? Why is not the race to the swift and the battle to the strong? If a man die, shall he live again? These and other questions seemed to demand a restatement of the whole argument for faith in God.

¹ Jer. viii. 8; ix. 23; xviii. 18. Yet there is little to choose between the bold religious questions of Jeremiah and Job.

² See G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*.

It must be remembered that the value of the individual experience did not really emerge until late in the seventh century B.C.¹ The early Israelite was not perplexed by the prosperity of the wicked or the troubles of the righteous because his religion was concerned with the well-being of the nation as a whole, not with that of its individual members; and, so long as the community flourished, the fact that an individual was miserable raised no questions concerning the ways of Providence. This habit of indifference to the individual welfare was not thought to be unjust even though many were disqualified from taking a proper place in the community. The unhappy leper was shut out from the privileges of social and religious life, not only on account of his contagious affliction, but because such a man was simply out of place among the festive throng that assembled to feast and worship.² The popular idea of individual suffering came to be expressed in the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." What we call the law of heredity is concealed in this proverb, and the truth is deeply rooted in experience; for as we are members one of another, no man lives or dies to himself, and our character is largely determined, for good or ill, by forces of the past. This feeling of unity in the life of a people through all the stages of its history was deeply wrought into the consciousness of Israel; but there is a sense of individuality which refuses to be crushed by the dead weight of the past, and this grand remonstrance of the spirit marked an epoch in human development. In the dark days of the

¹ See Charles, *Eschatology*, chapter ii.

² See *Religion of the Semites* (W. R. Smith): Lecture VII.

exile, when apparent inequalities in the distribution of suffering weighed heavily upon the heart of the Jew, the sense of relation to the past did not explain how guilt or merit could be transferred from one generation to another. The smooth proverbial interpretation of life was not seriously questioned until it came under the piercing criticism of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and never has the absolute worth of the individual soul been more nobly declared than in these words: "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. . . . What mean ye, that ye use this proverb . . ., 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel."¹ This new teaching of the independent value of the individual struck a chord of hope in the heart of man, and is the foundation of every charter of human liberty.

But the varieties of individual experience were still to originate the most searching questions. It seemed to follow from the new prophetic teaching that in shaking off the incubus of ancestral guilt each man was treated according to his desert. The old doctrine of reward and retribution (in its national application) was now rigorously applied to the individual. There is so much truth in the connection between sin and suffering, goodness and happiness, that it is not surprising to find that it took a firm hold of the national consciousness, and became the theme to which "the lyre of Hebrew bards was strung." The man whose delight is in the law of the Lord "shall be like a tree planted by

¹ Ezek. xviii. 2-4. Called to prophesy, 592 B.C. (Peake).

the rivers of water, . . . and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so : but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."¹ There were subtle dangers, however, lurking in the neighbourhood of these truths.

(a) If good conduct be the passport both to Divine blessing and worldly success, virtue might be thought worth cultivating, not for its own sake, but for the sake of its results. A modern writer² has expressed this quite bluntly : Were truths such as the material reward of virtue and the swift punishment of vice forced upon our minds by overwhelming evidence, so that we could feel no doubt about them, would not the inevitable result be that in spite of ourselves we should be virtuous through hope of reward and deterred from vice solely by the fear of punishment ?

(b) There was even a greater danger. So long as all went well with him the good man would feel happy in God's favour ; but if the reward failed and misfortune came, doubts would come whether God had kept His promises. The effort to reconcile these things with the revealed character of God has sometimes been too painful for thought.³

The psalmists and prophets fought these doubts. They re-established their faith by the conviction that the prosperity of the wicked was short-lived, whilst the reward of the righteous was ultimately assured ;⁴ but this did not dissipate all the spectres of the mind, for the birth of the individual soul in Israel had created a conscience which had many

¹ Ps. i. This teaching is the kernel of the Book of Deuteronomy.

² Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, Everyman's Library, vol. ii. Appendix : "On the Ignorance of Man."

³ See Ps. lxxiii.

⁴ See Pss. xxxvii., xlix., lxxiii., lxxvii.

scruples, even after the orthodox verdict had been pronounced. In days of storm and stress, three unknown men stood up, not to buttress any traditional belief, but to seek new light on the mystery of suffering.¹ The first was the unknown prophet of the exile who wrote the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. The suffering servant—lonely, misunderstood, despised—is to be identified with the nation of Israel, whose hopes had died during the exile to revive again in the sense of a mission to the world. The world is to perceive the mistake it has made in misjudging the sufferer, and the revulsion of feeling will invest his disfigured countenance with a halo of spiritual beauty. The sorrows of Israel are interpreted as vicarious—by its stripes the world is to be healed; and this law of atonement was to haunt the imagination of mankind until it found its perfect setting in the Christian revelation. This profound explanation of suffering finds no place in Job or Ecclesiastes. When attention was diverted from the sorrow of a nation, elected to a worldwide mission, to the misfortune of an individual, the problem seemed too insignificant to be worthy of such a meaning. Israel might come within the scope of a universal Divine purpose, but how could the troubles of an individual be raised to such dignity? Yet, once the moral rights of personality had been asserted, the problem pressed for a solution. Ecclesiastes never emerged from the deeper shadows of it. Keenly sensitive to the mystery of life, and confessing his inability to penetrate it, he rejected the obvious conclusion that there is no moral government of the world, and simply fell back on

¹ They may be given in this order: the unknown authors of Isa. liii., the Book of Job, and Ecclesiastes.

the plain duties of religion.¹ Job makes a more determined fight for faith. Reared under the dogma of the inevitable connection between sin and suffering in its bearing on the individual, he cannot reconcile it with experience, and his spirit rises to the demand to be true to himself at any cost to the feeling of society or the traditions of his race. He is deeply perplexed, but he will not make his judgment blind, and obeying this fine instinct for truth he follows every clue with an earnestness which is rewarded with wider conceptions of God and the world.

V.

What, then, is the significance of the book—the main purpose for which it was written?

(a) Some have read it, only to be confirmed in the conviction with which they began—that the ways of God with man are inscrutable. They find the kernel of the book in the twenty-eighth chapter, which declares the ignorance of man, emphasised by the Divine speeches, which confound all human reasoning. It is to humble man, to teach him that he is not the measure of the universe.² The daring spirit of the author has encouraged some to regard it as representative of their own agnostic attitude to life. Renan thought that the writer of Job needed to learn that no special will governs the world, and that what happens is the result of blind effort tending upon the whole towards good;³ but Hebrew thought, however far it may seem to wander from

¹ See my *Ecclesiastes ; or, The Confessions of an Adventurous Soul*. (Macmillan, 1916.)

² Mark Rutherford.

³ *History of the People of Israel*. Quoted by Strahn.

the beaten track, does not arrive at this conclusion. Even the Book of Ecclesiastes, which represents a still darker view of life, is redeemed by the stubborn conviction that "it shall be well with them that fear God." The Book of Job certainly teaches that it is not wrong to ask questions in religion, and it justifies that modern tribute to the existence of a large degree of faith in honest doubt; but it is not true to call the writer of Job an agnostic, for he is one who has passed through that phase of experience to find a stronger faith his own. He does not think that he has solved his problem, but there is a religious faith which is content to say, "Now we see through a glass darkly"—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." This is the faith of Job.

(b) An eminent expositor¹ claims that the central purpose of the book is to vindicate the character of man. The clearing of Job's character, as the representative of humanity, is the solution of the whole problem. The problem is: Doth Job fear God for nought? 'It is a challenge to disinterestedness in religion, a cynical refusal to believe in any pursuit of goodness for its own sake in a world where the fear of God was certainly regarded as the sure road to material success. The Book of Job is the triumphant answer to cynicism. Job *does* fear God for nought. There is a spiritual service which does not seek material reward, a hunger for communion with God which survives all losses, and the triumph of Job is the vindication of human nature. There is much attraction in this view, but it can only be accepted as one of the important side-issues of the book. The teaching of the Prologue makes everything depend upon the Divine initiative ("Hast thou

¹ Genung.

considered my servant Job?"), and there the character of Job is beyond reproach. The book is on a grander scale than the mere refutation of slander. No doubt man's extremity is cynicism's opportunity, and this is demonstrated in Goethe's *Faust*, which has some resemblance to the Hebrew story;¹ but the Prologue of *Faust* implies a low view of human nature in the Divine mind, and Faust, being more intellectual than virtuous, lays himself open to the sneer of the cynic.

(c) No doubt the main impression we gain in reading the Book of Job is the denial of the theory that sin and suffering are in all cases closely connected, and it is clearly part of the author's purpose to show, in the long discussion between Job and his friends, that this theory of Providence cannot be harmonised with a wide observation of facts. Job himself is an instance of suffering not accounted for by previous sin, and experience can point to notoriously wicked men in material prosperity to the day of their death. But can this refutation of a theory be regarded as the main purpose of the book? Does it arrive at a merely negative conclusion? An old idea is discredited, but what is put in its place? Once the ground is cleared of an inadequate theory, we naturally expect some positive contribution to the subject, and in a measure we find it in the restoration of a forgotten truth which ministers comfort to the heart: the innocent do suffer, not as chastisement for imputed guilt, but as a trial of character. The Jew had already learnt this in the history of Joseph, which refutes the statement of Renan² that patriarchal history regarded all suffering as retribution; but

¹ Goethe's remark to Eckermann in 1825. ² *Le Livre de Job*.

the lesson had been obscured until it was restored in the wisdom literature. Yet even this solution does not cover the whole ground of the subject, for the deepest questions of Job are left unanswered, and we are forced to believe that all sidelights on the mystery of his sufferings are subordinate to some wider design.

(d) We may safely reject the idea that the author's end in view was negative and destructive, and regard as quite subordinate to the main purpose the vindication of human character. Both these theories are suggestive, but they only fit into their proper place when we perceive that the book is primarily designed to broaden men's view of God and the world. Job is employed to clear the ground of theories which cannot survive the test of experience—to discover the limits of human knowledge—to approach the "thick darkness where God is,"¹ but he is not left there. He is to receive the reward of those who rise above personal complaint to face

Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad, for human kind.²

The moment had come to ask: In view of the baffling perplexities and obvious injustices of life, how can belief in an almighty or just God be maintained? The answer did not come to the speculative mind, but, as it always comes, if it comes at all, through a quickened sense of God. It disclosed the concern of almighty wisdom in the welfare of the individual life, the Divine repudiation of all attempts to gloze over the contradictions of experience, and approval of all search for truth. Most precious of all is the assur-

¹ Exod. xx, 21.

² *The Happy Warrior* (Wordsworth).

ance that the misgivings of the intellect need not debar the soul from fellowship with God. Job guesses the truth that the world is but one stage in the drama of life—he is taken out of himself by seeing the wonders of creation; but so long as he doubts whether God is infinitely good as well as great he is in spiritual darkness. It is the vision of the God of righteousness and love which saves him from his darkest thoughts, and lifts him unawares out of all mean thoughts of life, out of loneliness and fear. The meaning of his sufferings is never explained to him, but he is one with God again in a fellowship untroubled by doubt concerning the moral government of the world. It is the soul's own secret, but when God has whispered it into the ear it becomes a certainty to faith. It is this revelation—that behind the mystery of life there is real affinity between the Divine and human nature, there is One who understands, shares the thoughts, returns the love of His servants—it is this which makes the Book of Job supreme in the literature of consolation.

Love thy God and love Him only,
And thy breast will ne'er be lonely.
In that one Great Spirit meet
All things mighty, grave, and sweet.
Vainly strives the soul to mingle
With a being of our kind;
Vainly hearts with hearts are twined,
For the deepest still is single.
An impalpable resistance
Holds like natures still at distance.
Mortal! love that holy One
Or dwell for aye alone.¹

¹ De Vere.

VI.

The most sublime and primitive ideas of God and the world form the background of this book. God dwells in the height of heaven without a rival to His throne, and His greatness is displayed in the creation and sustaining of the universe. He planned the mighty edifice, prepared the site, and the foundation-stone was laid with jubilant song when "the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy."¹ The ascriptions to Divine omnipotence and wisdom are not defences against idolatry, but designed to convince man of his subordinate place in a world which is controlled by One who reigns alone, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see.

When God appears in judgment His anger convulses the earth; the thunder is His voice, and in the hush of the night there comes to a man a shuddering sense of His reality.² Yet there are possibilities of fellowship between God and man, for God is not a despot, not indifferent to human fate; He speaks to man not once but twice,³ and there are those to whom His revelations come as "songs in the night."⁴ The omnipotence of God is matched by His holiness. The heavens are not clean in His sight,⁵ and He charges His angels with folly.

The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. He is revealed in the panorama of Nature, in the mighty constellations, the arch of the dayspring, the balancing of the clouds, the seasons of the year; and no less wonderful is the diversity of the animal creation—the

¹ xxxviii. 7. ² iv. 15. ³ xxxiii. 14. ⁴ xxxv. 10. ⁵ xv. 15.

variety of instinct and habit, the strange blending of strength and beauty, simplicity and wisdom, speaking of the infinite resourcefulness of the mind which governs and pervades the world.

God is the all-wise, whose ways are beyond human understanding; and when man has said his best about Him, he has to confess that he has but touched the hem of the garment in which the Almighty has robed His mysterious loveliness.¹

Amidst the oratorio of creation there is the echo of conflict and triumph. The Divine serenity is the result of the Divine activity, which has brought order out of chaos. The chaos monster² has been overthrown. When the sea burst turbulently from chaos, rushing as if it would engulf the sky, the Divine power shut it down with bolts and bars, and this vigilance is never relaxed.³

The sea is the symbol of mystery and rebellion in Hebrew literature. It reflects something of the bewildering thoughts which surge within the human soul, for nothing gives a more vivid notion of chaos than "the huge various monotonies, the fervent and fluent colours, the vast limits, the fresh, sonorous strength, the certain confusion and tumultuous law, the sense of windy and weltering space, the intense refraction of shadow or light, the crowded life and inanimate intricacy, the patience and passion of the sea."⁴

If God judges the angels, what is man that He

¹ xxvi. 14.

² In Babylonian mythology the chaos-dragon (leviathan) dwells in the ocean. It is also called "Rahab" (boisterousness) in this book. See Cheyne (*Job and Solomon*, chapter ix.) on the mythological references in this book.

³ vii. 12; xxxviii. 10.

⁴ Swinburne's description of the sea in *William Blake*.

should consider him? He is a creature of flesh, dwelling in a house of clay, crushed as easily as the moth, short-lived as a delicate flower, yet he thinks of God and God thinks of him. He is but "a reed, the most feeble thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed . . . if the universe were to crush him, man would still be more noble than that which killed him because he knows that he dies, and the advantage which the universe has over him—the universe knows nothing of this."¹

The world is not only man's dominion, for God "causes it to rain in a land where no man is."² The purest gems lurk in unfathomed caves and roses blush unseen; but there is no waste in Nature, where all things, thunder and dew, the dry clod and the desert herb, the whirlwind and the wild liberty of animals, are dear to God. Man has communion with Nature in all her myriad forms, and there is a hidden harmony between the knowledge, the pain, the peace of man, and the dumb creation.³

Man has to learn that he is not the centre of the universe, that all things do not converge to him; yet he alone has thoughts that can wander through eternity and the pains of an intellectual being. Deep-rooted in his nature is both the sense of God and the sense of justice expressed in the instinctive exclamation, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Yet that artless question implies the possibility of moral dilemma. When outward circumstances correspond to inward serenity, the childlike heart of man reposes on the unseen, and nothing disturbs faith in the moral government of the world; but when life becomes difficult and com-

¹ Pascal's *Thoughts*, 347.

³ See v. 23; xii. 7; xxxviii.

² xxxviii. 26

plicated, when faith is challenged by the contradiction of experience, an upheaval of settled conviction may seem to shake the foundations of existence. When man misses justice in the world he is always in danger of missing the presence of God. There is no greater loss than that of faith, no compensation except the recovery of it, and a man may lose God in the lonely mystery of his own experience before he finds Him again in history and revelation, in Nature and Providence.

VII.

We know nothing of Job or the man who wrote his story beyond what we learn from this book. "The history of Job was probably a tradition in the East, like that of Priam of Greece, the symbol of fallen greatness, and his misfortunes the problem of philosophers."¹ The view that it is an Arab poem, antecedent to the Mosaic dispensation,² was due to its primitive colouring, the use of ancient Divine names,³ and other indications which only prove that the writer was an artist in the use of his materials.

There is abundant evidence to show that the age of Job and that of the writer of the book lie widely apart.⁴ The statement of Renan that "not one allusion is made to beliefs peculiar to the Jews" is part of the romance with which this writer usually invested sacred subjects;⁵ for the author of the Book of Job is a true Israelite, and his broad sympathies, with the power of reanimating the past, can never conceal the knowledge and ex-

¹ Froude.

² Coleridge, 1830.

³ *El, Eloah, Shaddai* (= Almighty).

⁴ See Appendix, Note B : "On the Age of the Book of Job."

⁵ *Le Livre de Job*.

perience of his race. The decisive argument for the later date of this composition is the ripe stage of reflection it exhibits on the problem of suffering, for it was not till the age of Jeremiah, when the state was breaking up and the old landmarks were being removed, that the traditional belief in the strict association of righteousness and material prosperity was seriously questioned. The problems of the individual life were discussed still later. The Book of Job is the noblest product of Hebrew wisdom, long exercised on the problems of life, and reaching maturity of judgment

In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

There is no need to fix the date of the book below 400 B.C. "It was, perhaps, as the fifth century was slipping into the past that the poet, whose genius made him the peer of the most gifted of our race, wrote his mighty work."¹

¹ Peake.

CHAPTER I

PIETY ON EARTH AND DEBATE IN HEAVEN

Life is—to wake, not sleep,
Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level, where blindly creep
Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep.

R. BROWNING : *Reverie*.

CHAPTER I. (VV. 1-12).

1. There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job ; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.
2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.
3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household ; so that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east.
4. And his children went and held a feast in the house of each one upon his day ; and they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them.
5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all : for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and renounced God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.
6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan¹ came also among them.
7. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou ? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.
8. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job ? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil.
9. Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for nought ?

¹ *The Satan* (Heb.).

10. Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.
11. But, put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face.
12. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

I.

WHERE is the land of Uz? It has been located in the neighbourhood of Edom, the traditional home of wisdom,¹ but the situation is uncertain. It is no Utopia, no product of the poet's imagination to which he has given a local habitation and a name, but a real world where man, living under happy conditions, is subject to all the changes and chances of this mortal life. If the patriarchal scene is simple and pastoral, if it speaks of a stationary life and settled views, it is not out of touch with the larger world of traffic and merchandise, of competition and war. We see the primitive administration of justice in the simple formality of the "daysman"² laying his hands on combatants, and in the punishment of the stocks; but we hear the rumour of other things—of crowded life in cities,³ of taskmasters, slaves, and prisons. These people know the pleasures of pastoral and agricultural life, but they can also enter into the peril of the miner when he seeks for treasure,⁴ and their sympathies extend even to the outcasts of mankind.⁵

They live at the fountains of perennial freshness,

¹ Uz is elsewhere mentioned in connection with Edom, Lam. iv. 12; Gen. xxxvi. 28. But Uz is also called a "son of Aram," Gen. x. 23.

² Chapter ix. 33. The word "daysman" possibly comes from Latin *diem dicere*=to fix a day for hearing a cause (see Spenser's *Faery Queen*, II. 8. 28).

³ xxiv. 12.

⁴ Chapter xxviii.

⁵ Chapter xxx.

enjoying the simple pleasure of life, absorbing the charm of Nature in all her manifold beauty; but they know the world of action—of swift posts and caravans lost in the desert, of kings and counsellors of the earth, and the migration of nations.¹ They know something of all these movements, yet life in the land of Uz is marked by an inward serenity undisturbed by social or political events, for it is founded upon moral principles as fixed as the laws of Nature, descending from a hoary tradition with a sanction which makes the oldest feel that they are but of yesterday.² Secure in the possession of this moral inheritance, all experience is simplified by an interpretation of life which ratifies without question the judgment of the past. Yet life in this land is redeemed from coldness and sterility by religion, leaving the heart open to impressions and discoveries which lie outside a placid philosophy. The sense of God—above the world, yet besetting Nature and Providence with unmistakable proofs of His presence, mingling mercy with judgment, redressing the wrongs of the poor, and taking the crafty in their counsels—is the sustaining thought in this patriarchal life, hallowing all relationships, sweetening all sorrows, and staving off the looming shadow of death.

“There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil. . . . This man was the greatest of all the children of the east.” This description of Job’s character does not imply that he was sinless, but that the two facts which are regarded as inseparable in the Old Testament—a high ideal of morality and a religious life—were

¹ vi. 18; iii. 14; xv. 19.

² viii. 9.

united in him to a remarkable degree; and the correspondence between character and fortune was in true keeping with the belief that material prosperity is a sure indication of the Divine favour. The outline of Job's character is filled in throughout the book by touches from a master hand which suggest a singularly strong and winsome personality.

The purity of Job's religion, its humility and childlike dependence upon God, harmonised with a sense of humanity which made him responsive to all claims and brother to the least of men. This is disclosed in the naïve confession,¹ "Did not he that made me in the womb make him?"—a sentiment which governed all his relations with his fellow-men.

We are not to think of him as removed from the temptations likely to appeal to one of the sons of the East. If he were superior to any gross appeal to the senses, if material comfort did not enervate his spirit, he would be no less susceptible to the spell of subtle superstitions which exercise a peculiar fascination on the child of Nature. Job was human enough to confess the seductiveness of Nature-worship—the attraction of "the sun when it shined or the moon walking in brightness"²—whilst he disowned any furtive compliance with primitive instincts which diverted the heart from the worship of God. The happiness of his life is reflected in the mirror of memory.³

The reality of the Divine presence could be expressed in terms of friendship—"when the secret of God was in his tent"⁴—and this spiritual fellowship shed a radiance over all the relationships of life.

¹ xxxi. 15.

³ Chapters xxix. and xxxi.

² xxxi. 26.

⁴ xxix. 4.

He made the interests of the community his own, taking his place at the council chamber, and giving to his fellow-citizens the benefit of a ripe judgment with a sympathetic understanding of their difficulties which earned the first place in their esteem. But the inner life was the source of the outer life. Striving to be pure in thought and intention, to resist abuse of his position, he knew the secret faults which might have left his reputation untarnished yet dishonoured him before God—the idolatry of wealth, triumph in the misfortune of his enemy, pride of heart. If he had any deep cause for satisfaction, it was because he had nothing in his life to hide, no cherished sin, no lurking hypocrisy; and this confidence gave him an erect bearing before his fellow-men, whilst it perpetually fed the flame upon his altar.¹ The gifts of heaven were showered upon him. He was like a tree which bringeth forth its fruit in its season, and whatsoever he did prospered.

A page out of Job's life will illustrate its simple and devout character. We see a beautiful picture of family life in a patriarchal age, not afraid of being happy, without a touch of gloom, where all relationships are consecrated by religion. Only the red-letter days are counted, and on the birthday² of each of the sons, brothers and sisters meet in a round of innocent festivity. The father has no desire to impose his own gravity upon them, and is content to see his children happy; but this is no fool's paradise, where "a feast is made for laughter and wine maketh glad the life, and money answereth all things."³ We are confirmed in our impression

¹ See chapter xxix. for a picture of Job's life before his trouble.

² Some think that there was a feast on every day of the week—a ceaseless round of festivity.

³ Eccles. x. 19.

of the inwardness of Job's religion when we see his concern that nothing may spoil the unity and peace of the family. He does not suspect any open disavowal of God by his children, but cannot bear to think that they might be carried away by undue exhilaration, to harbour the least irreverence of thought; so when the feasting is over, the father, as priest of the family, calls his sons and daughters together and "sanctifies them" by solemn acts of purification and worship. He rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, the smoke of the sacrifice carrying the message of a full surrender of the life to God. This did Job continually, his voice rising like a fountain night and day, covering every sin, strengthening every tie, so that his children might be in every way

Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.¹

II.

The scene changes from piety on earth to debate in heaven, from an idyllic life to the unseen background of human destinies, hidden from Job, mysterious to us. Modern versions of the scene do little to help us to distinguish between the dramatic art of the author and the truth which he depicts. If the main impression of a grave commentator is "its delightful humour,"² it is not surprising to find it treated by a master mind in the form of burlesque. The Prologue in Heaven in Goethe's *Faust* is no doubt modelled on that of the Heavenly Council in the Book of Job, but so far from catching

¹ Tennyson, *The Passing of Arthur*.

² Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*, p. 14.

the spirit of the original, it succeeds in perverting it. If Coleridge's charge of blasphemy is too strong,¹ it is none the less true that the scene in *Faust* is utterly lacking in the moral atmosphere which pervades the Book of Job from beginning to end. The sober genius of John Milton would no doubt have done full justice to the scene, but *Paradise Lost* and *Regained*, though coloured by its thought, are concerned with the drama of good and evil, not the mystery of a particular Providence as in the Book of Job. The latest equivalent to this Prologue is represented by a work which embodies a denial of any sympathy between the Divine Mind and human life. In the *Dynasts*,² Thomas Hardy manipulates celestial machinery in such a way as to express the same view of life which we see worked out in his fiction. Man is driven to his fate by a force to which there is no appeal, and the spirit of pity is mocked by an ironic chorus, applauding the mighty will which makes sport of the helplessness of man.

We turn from these distorted views to the original picture which, in spite of local scenery and dramatic rendering, faithfully reflects the true character of God and man.

God is solitary in His nature and character, yet not alone, for a host of heavenly beings are admitted to a share in His deliberations. They are called "sons of God,"³ because their status is above that of men, but they are strictly subordinate to the

¹ *Table Talk*, February 16, 1833.

² See Fore Scene of Part I.

³ Sons of God (sons of the Elohim—i.e., angels), just as "sons of men" mean those who belong to the human order. These supernatural spiritual beings may be described as morally neutral, our distinction between good and evil angels being unknown.

Divine will, and only keep their places so long as they perform it.

Thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.

They have varied functions—some to test the pretensions of man, others to succour him in the time of need—but they are all under the same moral government which decides their office and directs their thoughts to the highest considerations. Everything depends upon the Divine initiative, and nothing is done without it. It is not by chance that God speaks first in this debate in heaven, for the whole drift of this book expresses the truth that there is nothing accidental in the story. Heaven is not worked upon or overruled by sinister influences, and man is never left to the mercy of circumstances. Still more inspiring is the revelation of God as a believer in man. Mysterious though His dealings with man may be, it is clear that God is on man's side, never doubting his possibilities against the scepticism which puts a low value on human nature, so that when man is at the lowest pitch of despair he has still the warrant to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Such is the revelation of God to which we must adhere as we follow Job through the mazes of an experience which tested all his convictions of the justice of his Maker and the love of his fellow-men.

III.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."

It is unfortunate that our version obscures the

fact that Satan is not here the name of a person but that of an office.¹ Though he is represented as a person, his personal standing is only of the slightest consequence, whilst the rôle he has to play is quite clear. He is an instrument in God's hands to try Job, and when he has done that he disappears for good, simply because he is not important enough to have a permanent place assigned to him among the *dramatis personæ* of the poem.² The presence of "the Satan" throws no light on the mystery of evil. "He is not our Diabolus," says Coleridge.³ "There is no calumny in his words. He is rather the accusing spirit, a dramatic attorney-general. But after the Prologue, which was necessary to bring the imagination into a proper state for the dialogue, we hear no more of this Satan." There is no Devil, no Miltonic Satan, no Mephistopheles to be found in a situation which does not raise the problem of evil, but the problem of Divine providence. The character of "the sons of God" who presented their reports and received their commission is quite neutral, and when we dismiss from our mind the evil associations which belong to a later period we find that the Satan simply represents the function to oppose men in their pretensions to a right standing before God. In the story of Job he is an adversary only in the sense in which an inspector or examiner is adverse to those who come under their scrutiny. His position is exactly like that of the *Advocatus Diaboli* in the usages of the Roman Church, who has the function of opposing the

¹ *The Satan* (Heb.). See Appendix, Note C, "On the Idea of the Satan."

² See Davidson on this subject, *Job*, Introduction.

³ *Table Talk*, May 29, 1830.

canonisation of a saint lest any flaw should be overlooked.¹ In the execution of his office we may detect bias, even the possibility of a moral fall, but the Satan is never identified with the spirit of evil in the Old Testament. Since there is no fixed region of the earth to which his energies are confined, the question is asked, "Whence comest thou?" and the reply, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it," signifies the report of one who is unwearied in the service of his master.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil.' Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'Doth Job fear God for nought?'" His duty is to be suspicious, to find out the weak side of human nature, to believe nothing genuine without proof; and in scouring the earth he has seen so much hollowness concealed by fair pretensions that he has come to doubt the existence of disinterested goodness. Yes—he has considered Job, and whilst his outward show of piety is unmistakable, he believes him to be, at heart, no better than the rest. Self-interest is the root of it all, and if material support is taken away his religion will collapse. "I hate cynicism a good deal worse than I hate the Devil," wrote Stevenson,² "unless, perhaps, the two are the same thing." But they are not. We can only call this inspector of morals a cynic in the sense that he is sceptical of virtue until it is tested. He does not deny Job's virtue, but doubts its enduring quality under a severe trial.

¹ Moulton.

² *An Inland Voyage.*

Doth Job fear God for nought? Has not the Satan found out the weak spot of a current philosophy which, by strictly associating righteousness with material prosperity, opens the way for the barter of religious service for a worldly wage? Why not be righteous when it pays so well? Modern cynicism has definitely confirmed the Satan's conclusion in the dictum: All men have their price.¹ If Job incarnates the noblest refutation of that slander in history and literature, he is only the representative of a type which has never failed to uphold the same ideal—goodness without self-consciousness, love which spends itself without counting the cost, faith which endures, as seeing the invisible, redeeming the blotted scroll of life and writing between the lines an idyll of such exquisite sweetness that all the inconsistencies of human nature are nothing to be compared with the triumph of virtue.

IV.

This brings us to the close of a scene which decides the whole story of Job. The Satan presses his point with a persistence which seems to silence all objection. "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." We should not import more meaning into these words than they will bear. Those who think that they conceal a shaft of sarcasm aimed at the Divine character

¹ Generally attributed to Sir Robert Walpole, but the charge is questionable. See Lecky's *History of England*, vol. i., chapter iii.

itself, implying that no one loves God for Himself alone,¹ attribute a subtlety to the Satan which has no warrant in this book. Proverbial wisdom often taught that abundant wealth might become a snare to any man, and we have heard the petition for a moderate competency, neither poverty nor riches, for fear that the former may lead to theft and the latter to a denial of God.² The official censor of men may show a callous bent of mind, but he never forgets that he is a subordinate, subservient to the will of Heaven. He can do nothing to Job without the Divine will. The challenge is accepted. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy hand, only upon himself put not forth thy hand." All theories which profess to explain the reason for this action utterly fail to explore the region of mystery which lies in the unfathomable mind of God. When Ruskin assumes that Job is tried because, whilst to all appearances perfect, as far as a man can be, he lacks humility,³ he introduces a foreign idea into the narrative. When others assume that God is obliged against His inclination to silence doubt as to the sincerity of Job's goodness, in order to cure the Satan of his cynicism, they give a fictitious importance to that official and create an impossible contradiction between the Divine wisdom and mercy. One of the great lessons of the book is to teach us to acquiesce in the unsearchable Providence of God,⁴ and we can only speak of One whose ways are past finding out, yet "too wise to err, too good to be unkind." But

¹ Godet.

² Prov. xxx. 5-9.

³ *The Stones of Venice*, vol. iii., chapter ii. (Everyman's Library).

⁴ This is the main lesson according to Davidson : *Job*, Introduction, p. xxviii.

if we believe that life is not an adventure but a discipline—if the idea of probation be accepted as throwing most light upon the mystery of experience,¹ then it was not to be expected that Job would altogether escape the common lot. In this respect he may be regarded (as, indeed, he came to regard himself) as a type of humanity. Between the Job of the Prologue and the Epilogue there lies a world of painful experience; yet who can doubt that as a result of it Job became a wiser if a sadder man? When we compare the wisdom of Job with the wisdom of his friends, and ask why the one was progressive whilst the other remained stationary, we know that one had never been put to the test, whilst Job's bitter experience converted the platitudes of faith into real discoveries. There came a moment when one of the friends was provoked to ask Job, "What knowest thou that we know not? What understandest thou which is not in us?"² All the time Job was learning lessons in the school of suffering undreamt of in proverbial philosophy, lessons of faith, hope, and courage, which he has taught the world. It is in struggle and pain that we learn the real value of the truths we inherit. Whilst we are spectators of the struggle we may not realise the issues at stake, but

When the fight begins within himself
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left himself i' the middle; the soul awakes,
And grows.³

¹ Taught by Elihu in this book and by Bishop Butler.

² Chapter xv. 9.

³ Robert Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*.

CHAPTER II

THE SORROW OF JOB

Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament ; adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many herselike airs as carols. And the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the affliction of Job than the felicities of Solomon. . . . Certainly virtue is like precious odours—most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed. For prosperity doth best discover vice ; but adversity doth best discover virtue.—*Bacon's Essays* : "Of Adversity."

CHAPTER I. (VV. 13-22).

13. And it fell on a day when his sons and daughters were eating
14. and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, that there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing,
15. and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away ; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword ; and I only am escaped alone to
16. tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them ;
17. and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have taken them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the
18. sword ; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in
19. their eldest brother's house : and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead ;
20. and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon
21. the ground, and worshipped ; and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither : the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the
22. name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God with foolishness.

CHAPTER II. (VV. 1-10).

1. Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them
2. to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from
3. walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil: and he still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy
4. him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.
5. But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh,
6. and he will renounce thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; only spare his life.
7. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his
8. crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal;
9. and he sat among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still hold fast thy integrity? renounce God and die.
10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

JOB, the greatest of all the children of the East, is a stranger to us, and he does not live in our world; but one touch of nature, the touch of pain, makes him kin to us all. When his troubles come down "like the wolf on the fold," when the messengers have stammered out their evil tidings, when the old man looks dazed and crushed, when he is stricken down by disease, abject before God and man, then we recognise his human likeness; his cries for light, his daring guesses at truth, his conviction that suffering is a problem which concerns the moral government of the world, all find an echo in our hearts.

I.

The Satan has done his work with relentless thoroughness. There is no warning. Whilst the sun is shining in the heavens, whilst the cluster of Pleiades describe their majestic circuit, whilst nature is revelling in her myriad forms of life, the thunderbolts fall.

When the "hedge" about Job is broken down, disasters, in increasing magnitude, follow each other in rapid succession. The Sabeans, the fire from heaven, the great wind from the wilderness—man, God, and the forces of nature seem in league against him. The messengers tell their evil tidings with breathless brevity, and Job rises to his feet before the last crushing stroke which announces the loss of all that is most dear to him. He is no stoic. He gives way to the expression of an uncontrollable grief; yet, as we respect a sorrow into which we cannot enter, we see the triumph of the spirit in a noble resignation: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "Let us not think," says a modern sage,¹ "that these are mere empty words wherewith he consoled himself . . . the angels that dry our tears bear the form and the features of all we have said and thought; above all, of what we have done prior to the hour of misfortune." All Job's past life rose up in his conviction that a man's life is the gift of God, whose will is our blessedness, whether He gives or takes away.²

¹ Maeterlinck, *Wisdom and Destiny*, p. 43.

² William Blake echoes Job's words in a letter to Thomas Butts, January 10, 1802: "Naked we came here—naked of natural things—and naked we shall return; but while clothed with the

How long a time intervened between the first trial and the second we do not know, but it was long enough to prove that Job held fast his integrity. The prediction of the Satan was not fulfilled; the wreck of his fortune did not result in any failure of character. Again, we see the sons of God presenting themselves at the heavenly council, and we recognise one who has had his disappointment, but remains the same cool calculator of the price of things without realising their full moral value. The second appeal to his better judgment does not move him, for he is at no loss to account for Job's constancy under trial, and with the freedom of an old servant gives his own explanation. "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face.'" The Satan can only think in terms of barter and exchange.¹ A man will readily give up the skin of his flock to save his own skin, and so Job, bereft of his possessions, is still thankful to escape with his life; but, touch the man himself in his most vulnerable point, "his own bone and flesh," and he will be at the end of his resources. Again, the trial is permitted; Job is racked with intolerable pain,² and we see the stricken man sitting

Divine mercy we are richly clothed in spiritual, and suffer all the rest gladly."

¹ The most plausible explanation of "skin for skin" is that the proverb arose among a people for whom skins were an important article of barter. The Bedouin may have quoted this proverb when he extorted his blackmail from the shepherd, implying that if he wishes to save his own skin he must give the skins of his flock. (Peake, who quotes Duhm.)

² Probably the disease of Job was black leprosy, called "elephantiasis."

down amid the ashes of his life, a burden to himself and a spectacle of misery to the world. What is there left to him? With the props of his life struck away from him, with mind and body in torment, with the words of a distracted woman ringing in his ears, what is there that can make life worth living? Yet the spirit of the man survives. His past happiness was not a dream; holy memories still count for something, and he refuses to believe that he is God-forsaken. The structure of his life has gone, but the pillars of truth remain: "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips."¹

It was in the same spirit that the fallen minister of Persia, reduced to a melon-seller, rebuked the suggestion of Ferishtah to curse God and die.²

"How

Enormous thy subjection—hell from heaven
Made ten-fold hell by contrast! Whisper me!
Dost thou curse God for granting twelve years' bliss
Only to prove this day's the direr lot?"
Whereon the beggar raised a brow once more,
Luminous and imperial, from the rags:
"Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness
Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints
A day of woe to the unworthy one,
Than that the unworthy one, by God's award,
Tasted joy twelve years long?"

Job has much yet to suffer, to undergo greater losses than those of family and possessions, to feel keener pangs than those which come from physical pain, even to come perilously close to the fulfilment of the Satan's prediction; but before the real inner conflict is disclosed, we cannot fail to notice his

¹ ii. 10.

² R. Browning, *Ferishtah's Fancies*: "The Melon-Seller."

affirmation of a truth which is one of the grand lessons of this book. "What? shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" This sense of the sovereignty of God was to lay a new foundation for faith when the old philosophy, regulated by a commercial standard, proved utterly inadequate to explain the mystery of experience. Job's declaration that circumstances are no criterion of our standing before God touch a great height of religious insight, and when we come to the conclusion of the whole matter we shall find this faith confirmed by a fuller experience.

II.

We cannot put ourselves in Job's place, but as we contemplate his sorrows we can share some of his thoughts. His losses and the torment of pain would be enough to unnerve him, but the strain was accentuated by his ignorance of the meaning of it all, and the desertion of one whose companionship would have eased his burden. "The real agony is the silence, the ignorance of the why and the wherefore, the sphinx-like imperturbability which meets his prayers . . . the sky gives no sign."¹ With no knowledge of the Council of Heaven or the part the Satan has been allowed to play, Job has no clue to the sudden change of his circumstances. We must not anticipate the effect of this silence, as it gradually sank into his soul, but we cannot fail to notice now the contrast between the self-mastery of the sufferer and the weakness of one who was a spectator of it. We have seen one of "the sons of God" assuming the rôle of tempter, and now we see the

¹ Mark Rutherford.

same part played by "one that loved not wisely but too well." There has been much discussion about the character and conduct of Job's wife, and if ancient criticism has erred in painting her too darkly, modern opinion has, perhaps, gone to the other extreme.

We must not be influenced by the bias of St. Augustine nor by the chivalry with which a modern poet has cast around her the mantle of his protection.¹ This woman is not introduced for her own sake, and the key to her character is to be found in the way in which her husband understood her attitude towards his misfortune. We are not to cast a stone at one who shared with him the bitter pangs of bereavement; but that does not alter the fact that her failure imposed an additional strain on faith, and if Job had shown the same spirit his story would never have been recorded.

We are only to consider Job's wife as she was likely to affect her husband, and as we catch the meaning of her words ("Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Curse God and die."), there is no doubt that her faith failed under the very test which had been imposed upon Job. Is it worth while serving God for nought? It has proved an unprofitable service, and death itself is preferable to the profession of a faith which has been disenchanted. Job's answer expresses the moral indignation which the suggestion aroused.

"Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh." There is no reflection on her intellectual grasp of the situation, but a stern rebuke of a deficient moral sense; for this foolishness is no dulness of

¹ St. Augustine called her "a helper of the devil," and Blake illustrated her as a loyal and affectionate wife to the end.

mind, but sheer unbelief in God. It was the sense of God which sustained Job, and a previous comment of the author tells us the source of it: "In all this Job sinned not nor charged God with foolishness."¹ He cannot think of God doing anything ungodlike, anything unbecoming to His nature, and this dependence on a Divine consistency is as an anchor to his soul. This faith is to be severely tested, and the apparent discovery of discord in the Divine Mind will loosen his moorings and set him adrift "alone on a wide, wide sea"; but when he reaches a haven of rest again he will be confirmed in this conviction. Job has no idea of Fate or Matter or Evil by which to account for his misfortunes, but if his religion had been more of a pagan type he might have found a cause in the being of God Himself. The Greek tragedians had noble ideas of suffering, but they were always in conflict with the notion that adversity may arise from no deeper cause than jealousy from above.² You might have been told that the gods, envious of Job's prosperity, thought it was time to remind him that he was mortal, and this paganism has survived to this day in a lurking impression that God does not want us to be very happy. George Gissing, writing on a calm day in his stormy life, says: "So rooted in the human mind is the belief in an Envious Power that I ask myself whether I shall not have to pay, by some disaster, for this period of sacred calm."³

¹ Chapter i. 22. The word "foolishness" means here tastelessness, insipidity, unseemliness, and so want of moral discernment.

² Jealousy is ascribed to God in the Old Testament, but it is redeemed from low associations by the sense of a marriage relation between God and His people (Isa. liv. 5; Hos. ii. 19).

³ *The Private Papers of Henry Rycroft*, XXIV.

Even Science, in a pensive mood, confesses that gratitude for good fortune is sobered by a struggling sense that an exquisite enjoyment must surely prelude some equivalent disaster.¹ Job is entangled in a network of circumstances from which he cannot extricate himself, and his frantic helplessness will create distorted conceptions of God, but these hallucinations can easily be distinguished from the sanity which knows that at the heart of the universe there must be order and justice. When the fire of affliction has burnt away all that is temporary and trivial in his life—when all truisms have been tested in that flame—we find the bedrock of religion, the basis of the Christian view of God and the world.

One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life exists—
One only—an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power
Whose everlasting purposes embrace all accidents,
Converting them to good.²

III.

We have still to enquire into the condition of Job's mind which will account for all that follows. The rooted conviction of a moral law in the world will ultimately save him from the fiercest temptation to doubt it, and this will make the Book of Job very different from those confessions of the soul which are only the outpourings of a wounded spirit. We read the confessions of a Heine with sympathy for a great mind whose sufferings produced the most plaintive of litanies, but we read the Book of Job in

¹ Bashford, *The Corner of Harley Street*, xiii.

² Wordsworth, *The Excursion*.

order to discover the secret of an unconquerable faith. Those who interpret the patience of Job simply as a type of resignation to the inevitable, mingled with querulous complaints of his lot, miss the revelation of a nobility which raised the whole standard of life.

"We are to be exercised, humbled, tried, and tormented to the end," wrote one whose life was full of broken purposes.¹ "It is our patience which is the touchstone of our virtue. To bear with life even when illusion and hope are gone, to accept this position of perpetual war, while at the same time loving only peace; to stay patiently in the world even when it repels us . . . to make no attempt to escape from the human hospital, longsuffering and patient as Job—this is duty."

But was this Job's conception of duty?

We recognise the spirit of true religion in these words, but they express the thought of a man more aware of his limitations than the possibilities of life. The pensive spirit of Amiel could not suppress the note of self-pity which was the expression of one who had yielded to untimely discouragement and despair. In applying these reflections to Job the Frenchman betrays the moodiness which sterilised his genius rather than the spirit in which Job confronted the altered circumstances of his life. Stunned by the suddenness of his fall, the stricken man gradually awakens to the fact that he is no longer a centre of attraction, but an object of pity. The grim truth works upon his mind in the daily monotony of pain, and the arrival of his friends finds a man "smitten of God and afflicted" beyond recog-

¹ Amiel's *Journal*, January 29, 1866, nine o'clock in the morning.

nition as the prince of former days. The first words of Job are nothing but a cry—a longing “not to be—to sleep, and so to end the heartache and the thousand shocks that flesh is heir to.” The critical attitude of his friends does something to sting him back to life, and as he reconsiders his position we become aware that we are in the presence of a man with unsuspected capacity for taking a broad view of the situation. His humiliation has not crushed his spirit, and he can rise to rare heights of self-forgetfulness. “Discouragement,” wrote a modern prophet,¹ “is but disenchanted egotism.” It is a morbid self-consciousness which gives a sickly hue to so many confessions of the soul, and we rise above it by a noble resolve to seek light on our way for the sake of those who may have to travel along the same path. This was the secret of Job’s ultimate triumph. The sufferer became an enquirer, and though his language may often seem like “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing,” yet a consistent purpose gives meaning to all of it. It is an endeavour to overcome a sense of personal grievance and share a common burden, for his sorrows open his heart to all who suffer until he feels himself to be a representative of humanity with a right to appeal from the verdict of time to the judgment of heaven.

¹ Mazzini on Lamennais, April, 1839.

CHAPTER III

THE FELLOWSHIP OF SILENCE BROKEN BY A CRY

Do you know
Sometimes when we sit silent and the air
Breathes gently on us from the orange-trees,
It seems that with the whisper of a word
Our souls must shrink, get poorer, more apart ;
Is it not true ?

Speech is but broken light upon the depth
Of the unspoken.

GEORGE ELIOT : *The Spanish Gipsy*.

CHAPTER II. (VV. 11-13).

11. Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place ; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite : and they made an appointment together to
12. come to bemoan him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept ; and they rent every one his mantle,
13. and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him : for they saw that his grief was very great.

CHAPTER III.

1. After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.
2. And Job answered, and said :
3. Let the day perish wherein I was born,
And the night which said, There is a man child conceived.
4. Let that day be darkness ;
Let not God regard it from above,
Neither let the light shine upon it.
5. Let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own ;
Let a cloud dwell upon it ;
Let all that maketh black the day terrify it.
6. As for that night, let thick darkness seize upon it :
Let it not rejoice among the days of the year ;
Let it not come into the number of the months.

7. Lo, let that night be barren ;
Let no joyful voice come therein.
8. Let them curse it that curse the day,
Who are ready to rouse up leviathan.
9. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark :
Let it look for light, but have none ;
Neither let it behold the eyelids of the morning :
10. Because it shut not up the doors of my *mother's* womb,
Nor hid trouble from mine eyes.
11. Why died I not from the womb ?
Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly ?
12. Why did the knees receive me ?
Or why the breasts, that I should suck ?
13. For now should I have lien down and been quiet ;
I should have slept ; then had I been at rest :
14. With kings and counsellors of the earth,
Which built up waste places for themselves ;
15. Or with princes that had gold,
Who filled their houses with silver :
16. Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been ;
As infants which never saw light.
17. There the wicked cease from troubling ;
And there the weary be at rest.
18. There the prisoners are at ease together ;
They hear not the voice of the taskmaster !
19. The small and great are there :
And the servant is free from his master.
20. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,
And life unto the bitter in soul ;
21. Which long for death, but it cometh not ;
And dig for it more than for hid treasures ;
22. Which rejoice exceedingly,
And are glad when they can find the grave ?
23. *Why is light given* to a man whose way is hid,
And whom God hath hedged in ?
24. For my sighing cometh before I eat,
And my roarings are poured out like water.
25. For the thing which I fear cometh upon me,
And that which I am afraid of cometh unto me.
26. I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither have I rest,
But trouble cometh.

SOME time seems to have elapsed between the last scene and the visit of the friends of Job. During these weary days the full realisation of his lot would come home to him. The time would seem interminable: in the morning he would say, "Would

God it were even"—at even he would cry, "Would God it were morning"; yet the morning brought no light and the even no rest.

I.

"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place: Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite." Living at a distance from one another, they made an appointment to meet and travel together on an errand of mercy. The title of Eliphaz confers a certain distinction for wisdom,¹ whilst the ancestry of his two friends cannot be clearly traced; but with differences in station and character they are drawn together by the same motive to visit their afflicted friend and minister comfort. They see a man so disfigured by disease that they can hardly recognise him, but they do not inflict upon him the experience of a greater sufferer whose marred visage haunted his fellow-men; they do not despise or reject him or hide their faces from him,² but pay tribute to a man of sorrows. "They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." The failure of Job's comforters has become proverbial, but we need to remember that, at heart, they were sincerely religious and humane, animated by the kindest feelings towards their friend. They are to become the instruments of his most poignant sufferings, yet we do them an injustice

¹ "Of Edom thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Is wisdom no more in Teman? . . . Is their wisdom vanished?" (Jer. xlix. 7).

² Isa. lii. 14; liii. 4.

if we fail to recognise their good intentions. Silence is a great test of friendship. "‘We do not know each other yet,’ wrote to me¹ one whom I hold dear above all others, ‘we have not yet dared to be silent together.’" Job, in the presence of his peers, good men educated in his own school, bound to him by ties of strong affection, would appreciate a silence which meant fellowship. In a helpful silence "the mind is fed—it is to feel solitary yet not desolate, singular yet not without someone to keep thee in countenance . . . silence hath her deeps that call unto deeps."² Bathed in this sympathetic stillness, the tired mind would be somewhat refreshed. There are those who interpret the meaning of this silence in a different way. Blake (who may have quoted from his own experience) seems to have thought that Job would have been calmer if he had been left alone, for the mere presence of these spectators of his misery was aggravating, and accounts for the sudden change from a sublime resignation to despair.³ Others think that the sensitive man perceived in the faces of his friends an ominous indication of their feelings. The shock of surprise at his condition was also a shock of disappointment, withdrawing their sympathy from one who was obviously an object of Divine judgment. The silence became critical, and Job revolted against the first symptoms of divergence between himself and his friends.⁴ It is much more likely that, whilst the sufferer deeply appreciated the fellowship of silence, a full heart could not at length endure it,

¹ Maeterlinck, *The Treasure of the Humble*.

² "A Quaker's Meeting": *Essays of Elia*.

³ See Wicksteed's explanation of Blake's seventh illustration of the Book of Job.

⁴ Genung.

and the consciousness of his innocence, combined with this unspoken love, broke down a stoic composure. We give way before our friends sooner than before strangers, and Job would look to those who knew him so well to make allowance for a frenzied man. They will not judge him harshly. Unmanned in their presence, he can weep without being ashamed, and with impassioned speech seek to "cleanse the stuff'd bosom of the perilous stuff" which weighed upon him.

II.

"There must be a wonderful soothing power in mere words, since so many men have used them for self-communion. . . . I take it that what all men are really after is some form, or perhaps some formula, of peace."¹ Job's soliloquy, which broke on days of silence, is the language of a desperate man seeking not for some formula of peace, but for peace itself, touching such deep chords in our nature that his words have expressed every mood of suffering—from the passing grief of a schoolboy to the sombre tragedy of a Dean Swift.² "And Job answered and said, 'Let the day perish wherein I was born.'" It is the fate of Job to be misunderstood, and the imprecation on his birthday which relieved the unquiet heart and brain has been too severely judged. It is not the expression used by Job's wife, not the curse which renounced God, not the pessimism which accepts the axiom that

¹ Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*.

² It will be remembered that Tom Brown went to sleep on a memorable occasion murmuring, "when the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," and this third chapter of Job was read by Swift on his birthday.

life is not worth living. His complaint is not that he was born, but that he was born on an unlucky day, and it is implied that had he been born on a more fortunate day everything would have been different. The mind of Job has sunk back into a region of superstition which makes him one with any child of antiquity to whom the days of the year had a kind of life of their own and paid annually recurring visits to mankind.¹ Job wishes *his* day to become a blank in the calendar—when its time comes round let God pass it over, and, according to primitive ideas, a curse like this, expressed with sufficient energy, had a certain inherent power to get itself realised. If the day cannot be actually blotted out, then let magicians cast a spell over it and make it an unlucky day for ever!

Let them curse it that curse the day,
Who are ready to rouse up leviathan.²

It seems as though Job is thrown for the moment "out of his orbit into a condition too elementary for hope; back of trust, back of religion, into that crude necromantic superstition which curses days and deals in the obscure mysteries of materialism. From this low starting-point he is to find his way upward to light and God again."³ This idea of inauspicious days is deeply rooted in the mind of man, and finds its place in all literature.⁴ John

¹ See Cheyne, *Job*.

² iii, 8. "Leviathan" may be the cloud-dragon supposed to be able to cause an eclipse of the sun, but Peake identified it with the sea, the Chaos-dragon which waged primeval warfare with the Creator. "Let those who can rouse the sea with their spells curse this day."

³ Genung.

⁴ Read the curse of Constance, the mother of Arthur, in *King John*, Act iii., Scene I.

Aubrey, whose life was full of trouble, took pains to make some observations on fatal days, which show a curious strain of superstition thriving in the mind of a man who knew John Milton, and was one of the founders of the Royal Society.¹ It is not uncommon to find the most childish ideas existing side by side with the most enlightened, and we find them in the mind of Job, but we must not take him too seriously. There is a childish bitterness in his language, but cynicism (which ever dogs the steps of Job) has no right to quote his words as a warrant for its own teaching; and when Samuel Butler² claims Job's soliloquy as a sanction for saying that no man of forty would relive his life if he had the offer of doing so, he slanders not only life itself, but a man whose spirit finally triumphed over all his moods.

III.

Job turns from his own wretchedness to the prospect of a peace which might have been his. The conception of the after-life³ was one of dreary monotony, a bare existence bereft of colour or interest. Here were the shades of men, bloodless, voiceless, in whom the flame of life feebly flickered like a dimly burning wick just escaping extinction. Some mild sensation might be roused in this lifeless region by the arrival of one who had been illustrious on earth; the sudden fall of a king of Babylon might even provoke comment,⁴ but the flutter of

¹ *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects*, by John Aubrey, F.R.S.

² *Erewhon*, p. 198.

³ *Sheol*=the Hollow (Dante's "Hollow Realm"). See Appendix, Note D.

⁴ Isa. xiv. 10: "Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?"

interest would subside into the old hopeless languor of those who had nothing to expect from the future. Job himself can paint Sheol in the darkest hues, but here the thought of it fascinates him. It is a state rather than a place that he contemplates—a state which, by contrast with the present, seems to have every alluring charm of peace. The thought of it calms the sufferer's mind, and his passionate soliloquy subsides into a matchless elegy on the quiet dignity of death.

Then had I been at rest :
With kings and counsellors of the earth.
There the wicked cease from troubling ;
And there the weary be at rest.
There the prisoners are at ease together ;
They hear not the voice of the taskmaster !
The small and great are there :
And the servant is free from his master.

Whilst Job thinks of being in the company of those who had played famous parts in history, he cannot suppress the fellow-feeling which breathes brotherly love to all mankind. This Dives had not forgotten the Lazarus at his gate.¹ He had resisted the oppression of the poor, comforted the sorrowful ; and now he sees the inequalities of earth vanish in the dead level of a society where the slave has won his freedom, and the weary lie down to a rest which they had never known before. Job does not moralise. He is in no mood for comment on a picture which raises deep reflections in a philosophic mind, but we cannot forget the impressions of one, in later days, who gazed upon a similar scene.² “ When I see kings lying by those who deposed

¹ See chapter xxix. 12.

² Addison, *The Spectator* : “ Reflections in Westminster Abbey.”

them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs of some that died yesterday and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."

IV.

The vision of peace soon fades away, and Job awakens to the consciousness of his own plight. He is not fully awake, not yet obsessed by that sense of injustice which is to prompt his bitterest speech. He seems to be fighting phantoms, impersonal things, such as the day of his birth, the night of his conception. But all the time he is aware of a Presence behind the shadows of his experience, and he is about to utter His Name.

Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery
 . . . to a man whose way is hid
 And whom God hath hedged in?

All the instincts of a lifetime restrain Job from challenging his Maker, but the truth must come out. It is not until his friends begin to ply him with their views that he actually names God as the author of his troubles,¹ but already we see the direction towards which his mind is moving. There is one thing Job cannot, will not do—he cannot gloze over facts. The visible fence which once protected his life has been broken, leaving him at the mercy of hostile forces within and without. He does not claim to be sinless, but he is not

¹ vi. 4.

conscious of any sin which would draw down such heavy judgment upon him. He cannot suppress the questions that rise within him, nor does he doubt the presence of Someone who can give an answer. He does not think that Sheol can solve the riddle of his life,¹ and simply throws himself upon God as the author of his being and his past prosperity. In a poem² which reflects some of the dark problems of Job, the sufferer answers his own bitter question, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery?"

Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with
To lead those false who trust it.

Empedocles flings out his Wherefore? to a dumb universe, and finally buries his sorrow in Etna's crater. Job's struggle for light is sustained by his past experience, and even when he reaches the lowest abyss of alienation from God, still stretches out "lame hands of faith" and calls to what he feels is Lord of all. The soliloquy closes with a touch of feeling so intense that it must be the record of a vivid experience :

I fear a fear and it cometh upon me,
And that which I dread cometh unto me :
I have no ease and no quiet and no rest,
And yet turmoil cometh.³

What is this nameless fear? Some have thought that in this confession Job allowed a secret to escape from him. His piety has all the time been largely an uncertain, uncomfortable fear—an endeavour to avoid some blow in the dark rather than real confidence in God—and now his fear is realised : coming events had cast their shadow before them.⁴

¹ See chapter xxviii. 22.

² *Empedocles on Etna* (M. Arnold). ³ Driver's translation.

⁴ See chapters vii. 14 ; ix. 34 ; xiii. 21.

Religion may be of this type—born of fear rather than love; yet we have no indication that Job's former happiness had been disturbed in this way. But now we see a scared man seeking to ward off some unknown peril. Job does not lack courage—then what does he fear? Has not the worst already happened to him? Can he lose more than home, family, health, society, peace of mind?

Has he not the spirit to face the sum-total of all that might yet lie before him and defy it? "Death?—well death, and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and man may will or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be, and as a child of freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet under thy feet while it consumes thee?"¹ Job has the heroism to do this, but until the vision of God dawns upon him his soul will be in the shadow. No earthly loss, no cowardice of mind, but loss of fellowship with God has created this mysterious dread which the lamp of reason cannot dispel. In the light of revelation, perfect love will cast out fear, but nothing less than that will calm a fevered imagination "wrapped in stormy visions keeping with phantoms an unprofitable strife." Bereft of the Divine fellowship, Job is a child of nature, like one who, seeing life's shadows before and behind, poured out his heart to the little creature of the fields.²

Still, thou art blest compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee;
But och! I backward cast my 'ee
On prospects drear,
And forward tho' I canna see
I guess and fear.

¹ See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, chapter vii.

² Burns, *Address to a Mouse*.

CHAPTER IV

THE VISION OF ELIPHAZ

Our truest life is when we are in dreams awake.—THOREAU.

CHAPTER IV.

1. Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite and said,
2. If one assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved ?
But who can withhold himself from speaking ?
3. Behold, thou hast instructed many,
And thou hast strengthened the weak hands.
4. Thy words have upholden him that was falling,
And thou hast confirmed the feeble knees.
5. But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest ;
It toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.
6. Is not thy fear of *God* thy confidence,
And thy hope the integrity of thy ways ?
7. Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent ?
Or where were the upright cut off ?
8. According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity,
And sow trouble, reap the same.
9. By the breath of God they perish,
And by the blast of his anger are they consumed.
10. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion,
And the teeth of the young lions, are broken.
11. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey,
And the whelps of the lioness are scattered abroad.
12. Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
And mine ear received a whisper thereof.
13. In thoughts from the visions of the night,
When deep sleep falleth on men,
14. Fear came upon me, and trembling,
Which made all my bones to shake.
15. Then a spirit passed before my face ;
The hair of my flesh stood up.
16. It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof ;
A form was before mine eyes :
There was silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*,
17. Shall mortal man be more just than God ?
Shall a man be more pure than his Maker ?

18. Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants ;
And his angels he chargeth with folly :
19. How much more them that dwell in houses of clay,
Whose foundation is in the dust,
Which are crushed before the moth !
20. Betwixt morning and evening they are destroyed.
They perish for ever without any regarding it.
21. Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them ?
They die, and that without wisdom.

CHAPTER V.

1. Call now ; is there any that will answer thee ?
And to which of the holy ones wilt thou turn ?
2. For vexation killeth the foolish man,
And jealousy slayeth the silly one.
3. I have seen the foolish taking root :
But suddenly I cursed his habitation.
4. His children are far from safety,
And they are crushed in the gate,
Neither is there any to deliver them.
5. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up,
And taketh it even out of the thorns,
And the snare gapeth for their substance.
6. For affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground ;
7. But man is born unto trouble,
As the sparks fly upward.
8. But as for me, I would seek unto God,
And unto God would I commit my cause :
9. Which doeth great things and unsearchable ;
Marvellous things without number :
10. Who giveth rain upon the earth,
And sendeth waters upon the fields :
11. So that he setteth up on high those that be low ;
And those which mourn are exalted to safety.
12. He frustrateth the devices of the crafty,
So that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.
13. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness :
And the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.
14. They meet with darkness in the daytime,
And grope at noonday as in the night.
15. But he saveth from the sword of their mouth,
Even the needy from the hand of the mighty.
16. So the poor hath hope,
And iniquity stoppeth her mouth.
17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth :
Therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.
18. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up ;
He woundeth, and his hands make whole.

19. He shall deliver thee in six troubles ;
Yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.
20. In famine he shall redeem thee from death ;
And in war from the power of the sword.
21. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue ;
Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.
22. At destruction and dearth thou shalt laugh ;
Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.
23. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field ;
And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.
24. And thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace ;
And thou shalt visit thy fold and shalt miss nothing.
25. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great,
And thine offspring as the grass of the earth.
26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age,
Like as a shock of corn cometh in in its season.
27. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is ;
Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

WE shall see a chasm gradually open between Job and his friends ; but we must remember, in the first place, how much there was in common between them. Like all Semitic thinkers, they have no idea of what we call secondary causes. In their view, God is in such immediate relation to the world that good and evil come directly from His hand, and, being a righteous God, every event of His Providence must be either the reward of good or retribution on evil. But happiness and misery are not weighed out without any concern for the recipients, and when good people suffer it is not merely penal suffering, but a proof of the Divine intention both to correct and restore them. Although calamity is decisive of the fact that a man has sinned, it does not necessarily decide his real character. All depends upon the way he accepts it. If he is really a good man, he will accept it as a warning from God, turn from his evil way, and be restored to the Divine favour ; if he is bad at heart, he will reject this correction and so bring more misery upon himself.

To all this Job would have heartily agreed in former days, and there is not a word in the first speech of Eliphaz he would not have endorsed and applied to other people. The approaching alienation between Job and his friends must not blind us to the fact that, whilst each had a marked individuality, yet in their religious education there was nothing to choose between them. They do not represent different schools of thought, but the religious world looking broadly at life, unaware that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in any philosophy. "The speeches of Job's friends ought to be studied by every man who proposes to make the guidance and consolation of his fellow-men the duty of his life. For these speeches are, every one of them, lessons in how and how not to discharge that delicate and responsible office. The writer of the Book of Job is thoroughly fair to the traditional views . . . and represents them by men of honesty and even, at first, of courtesy, who take up their task in the sincere desire to help Job out of all his troubles. In particular, we have much to learn from the approach of Eliphaz the Temanite to his afflicted friend."¹

I.

Eliphaz is a man almost of prophetic rank, and his leadership is unquestioned. He is the most considerate of Job's friends, and in opening the debate contrives in every way to spare the feelings of the sufferer to the extreme to which his love will allow him. He is, no doubt, pained and shocked by

¹ G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*.

Job's outburst, but he still tries to think of him as he knew him in happier days, and his first word is one of surprise that he who has sustained others should himself break down at the touch of misfortune. Who knows better than Job the secret of peace?

Is not thy fear of God thy confidence,
And thy hope the integrity of thy ways?

Does Job need anyone to teach him the lesson of religious experience that the upright, though subject to affliction, never perish? It is those who deliberately sow mischief who reap a harvest of trouble. We should not impart any flavour of sarcasm to these words, even though we know that the physician has made a wrong diagnosis in this particular case; for Eliphaz means quite seriously that because Job is a good man he, of all people, ought to know that, whatever grave lapse he may have made, he is in the hands of a merciful God. And then the seer, with every consideration for Job's feelings, narrates a weird experience which taught him the lesson of his life:

Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
And mine ear received a whisper thereof.
In thoughts from the visions of the night,
When deep sleep falleth on men,
Fear came upon me, and trembling,
Which made all my bones to shake.
Then a spirit passed before my face;
The hair of my flesh stood up.
It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance
thereof;
A form was before mine eyes:
There was silence, and I heard a voice, saying,
Shall mortal man be just before God?
Shall a man be pure before his Maker?¹

¹ iv. 12-17. The last two lines are the marginal translation.

The vision of Eliphaz has been portrayed by Blake¹ with awful realism, and it has been called the most weird passage in the Old Testament.² Burke has expressed the awe inspired by it : " This passage in the Book of Job is amazingly sublime, and the sublimity is principally due to the terrible uncertainty of the thing described. . . . What is it ? Is it not wrapt up in the shades of its own incomprehensible darkness, more awful and striking than the liveliest description, than the clearest painting could possibly represent it ? " ³ These views record the impression made upon posterity by a picture which takes a high rank in the world's literature, but it is still necessary to ask the meaning it was first intended to convey. Is this one of the earliest and best-told ghost stories, or did Eliphaz on that eventful night receive a true message from the unseen ? Was this a human or Divine fear ? ⁴ We cannot doubt the reality underlying the vision. The dread of the unknown grips the heart of the sleeper, but through the dim intangible weirdness of the scene something comes to him which has all the impressive sanction of a revelation. It was the same vision which came to an awe-struck man in the Temple and determined his vocation.⁵ When Isaiah saw " the Lord sitting upon a throne " he was smitten by the sense of the Divine holiness and his own unworthiness, and this double consciousness was the making of one of the greatest of the prophets. We cannot test visionaries by ordinary

¹ Illustration IX. (see Wicksteed's *Job*).

² Cheyne ; and see Milton's use of it in *Paradise Lost*, II. 667.

³ " On the Sublime and Beautiful."

⁴ Charles Lamb asks the question in his " Essay on the Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty."

⁵ Isa. vi.

canons of criticism. When a modern seer like Henry Vaughan says¹—

I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,

it is of no use to ask whether he did really see it. We can only test visions by their spiritual worth, and Isaiah, Eliphaz, Vaughan, with a never-failing succession, corroborate each other in their conviction of an infinite purity of God which compels man to be a humble worshipper. No doubt the vision of Eliphaz leaves him cold and passionless, for it does not react upon him as it did upon Isaiah. This wise man has none of the spiritual glow of the prophet, and speaking from a lofty region of thought will make Job feel all the more acutely that God is far away from him; but, notwithstanding these defects, the profound reverence of Eliphaz is unmistakable. The revelation of the perfect purity of God is not self-evident, is easily obscured and forgotten, but it was the same exalted conception of God which purified the faith of Israel, and self-righteousness would never have blighted their spiritual growth if they had kept it ever before them.

II.

Whilst paying our tribute to the theology of Eliphaz we cannot help noticing his defective application of it, for in pressing home the frailty of angels and men he seems to place them almost beneath the Divine notice. This will lead him far astray as he comes to think of God exclusively as the austere Ruler who adjusts His judgment on human behaviour with the precision of a machine.²

¹ *The World*.

² See chapter xxii.

We miss the human note in this seer, who seems more anxious to vindicate his own views than minister to "a mind diseased," more concerned with high ideals than the facts of experience. Eliphaz does not as yet charge his friend with any definite sin, but it is the assumption underlying his words, and this indirect method would not fail to reach its object. "This oblique expostulation of his friends," says a kindly physician,¹ "was the greatest affliction of Job." Thinking he can read Job's thoughts, the seer advises him not to dream of appealing in his despair from God to the angels,² for this spirit of revolt will only bring fresh trouble upon him. He condenses his thoughts into an aphorism which has become current coin.

For affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground ;
But man is born unto trouble,
As the sparks fly upward.³

Trouble is no accidental thing, no strange unnatural growth, but arises from causes inseparable from human nature. As this teacher becomes more sententious, he drops into the common fault of thinking that he can put himself in another man's place without in any way sharing his experience. "If I were you, I would seek unto God."⁴ The wisdom of this counsel is blunted by the evident failure of Eliphaz to sound the depth of Job's trouble. How often we think we could bear any burdens better than our own! Othello⁵ is sure that his

¹ Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, Part II.

² v. 1: "To which of the holy ones (*i.e.*, angels) wilt thou turn?" Elihu teaches the true ministry of angels (chapter xxxiii.).

³ v. 6.

⁴ v. 8.

⁵ Act iv., Scene 2.

philosophy would not have failed him if he had been in Job's case.

Had it pleased Heaven
To try me with affliction ; had they rain'd
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steeped me in poverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience.

It may be so, but we have only his word for it, and Eliphaz also expresses with a little too much confidence what he would have done in Job's place. There is no fault to find with his counsel—he is thoroughly sound in recognising a logic of events which work out a moral purpose in the world ; but Eliphaz the seer, and Eliphaz the moralist, are two different people, and it is a welcome moment when proverbial wisdom gives place to the utterance of a man whose imagination kindles at a lovely prospect of blessedness. In a glowing peroration the poet depicts the peace awaiting the man who can leave himself in God's hand, for judgment or mercy. The celestial Surgeon has a tender heart, and the same hand which probes the wound, without flinching, binds it up. Man at peace with God is at peace with all God's creation, and no circumstances can place him beyond a Providence which can turn sorrow into joy and make bitter things grow sweet. As the ministries of cold and heat, sun and rain, assist to mature the shock of corn, so all events will tend towards the ripening of a good man's life. It is a beautiful picture of peace after storm. "As we pass beneath the hills which have been shaken by earthquake and torn by convulsion, we find that periods of perfect repose succeed those of destruction. The pools of calm water lie clear beneath

their fallen rocks, the water-lilies gleam, and the reeds whisper among their shadows . . . the fairest meadows bloom between the fragments, the clearest rivulets murmur from their crevices among the flowers, and the clustered cottages, each sheltered beneath some strength of mossy stone, with their pastured flocks around them, safe from the eagle's stoop and the wolf's ravin, have written upon their fronts in simple words, the mountaineer's faith in the ancient promise—

Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.

For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field :
And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.”¹

III.

As we listen to Eliphaz, we feel how qualified he might have been to minister to Job's need. With rare gifts of vision and eloquence, a keen imagination, and more sympathy than we usually credit him with, he might have been able to come down to the level of Job's humiliation and pour into his lacerated wounds the oil and wine of healing; but, with every intention to give him the full benefit of his wisdom, Eliphaz failed in the office of a comforter. We cannot doubt his sincerity, and his failure to grasp the situation is partly an intellectual one, for the seer and his afflicted friend are not standing on common ground. “All happy families resemble one another; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”² This is a thought Eliphaz could not entertain. To him life was regulated by a uniformity which left no room for

¹ Job v. 21-23. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. iv., chapter xviii. (Everyman's Library).

² First words in *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoi).

exceptions to general rules—all families were happy and unhappy in the same way. Whilst prosperity was the unmistakable hall-mark of God's favour, adversity could only mean correction for sin, and restoration was conditional on submission to the Divine order. These were the straight lines on which the mind of Eliphaz moved, creating an intellectual sincerity undisturbed by the anomalies of experience. But there was a deeper cause for his failure. If Job represents the mind of a man seeking for more light, Eliphaz is one who thinks that revelation is for ever closed; for he does not expect any more visions in the night, any clearer indication of the way of God with man. There was a moment when he seemed to catch a glimpse of a truth which has given a new interpretation to the meaning of Providence, and the word seems to be hovering on his lips that judgment may be prompted by love, that suffering may be the discipline of a father rather than the penalty of a judge.

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth :
Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.¹

If Eliphaz had followed that clue he might have been the herald of a message to mankind which casts a new, consoling light on the mystery of suffering; but the seer with the closed mind is not fitted to be the pioneer in teaching a humane theology, and it was left to a more youthful thinker to make discoveries in this direction.² Eliphaz pays the penalty for his limited outlook by gradually sinking in his rhetorical flight to a conventional level of life. The best he can wish for Job and the

¹ See Prov. iii. 11.

² See "Contribution of Elihu" (Chapter XIV. in this Story).

summit of human blessedness is the restoration of Job's former state, accumulation of property, a numerous offspring, and a long life. But whilst the seer is looking for these outward and visible signs of God's favour, Job is looking for something inward and spiritual; whilst the one is satisfied with his religious philosophy, the other reiterates the cry, "Oh, for a closer walk with God!" These different expectations will determine the trend of this story, its heights and depths, its light and darkness. As Eliphaz becomes more and more set in his opinions his vision will become clouded and narrowed down to the fixed idea that the sufferings of Job are in just proportion to the magnitude of his sin; whilst Job will break away from the traditional groove, respond to new impressions, follow every clue to truth until,

Like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken,

a new world of truth, goodness, and beauty will
dawn upon him.

CHAPTER V

THE PRICE OF EXPERIENCE

What is the price of experience? Do men buy it for a song?
Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the
price

Of all that a man hath—his house, his wife, his children.

Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy,
And in the withered field where the farmer ploughs for bread in
vain.

It is an easy thing to triumph in the summer's sun

And in the vintage, and to sing on the waggon loaded with corn.

It is an easy thing to talk of patience to the afflicted;

To speak the laws of prudence to the homeless wanderer;

To listen to the hungry raven's cry in the night season

When the red blood is filled with wine or with the marrow of
lambs.

It is an easy thing to laugh at wrathful elements,

To hear the dog howl at the wintry door, the ox in the slaughter-
house moan;

To see a god on every wind and a blessing on every blast;

To hear sounds of love in the thunderstorm that destroys our
enemies' house.

* * * * *

It is an easy thing to rejoice in the tents of prosperity;

Thus could I sing and thus rejoice; but it is not so with me.

BLAKE: *Four Zoas*.

CHAPTER VI.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. Oh, that my vexation were but weighed
And my calamity laid in the balances together!
3. For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas;
Therefore have my words been rash.
4. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me,
The poison whereof my spirit drinketh up:
The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.
5. Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?
Or loweth the ox over his fodder?
6. Can that which hath no savour be eaten without salt?
Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?

7. My soul refuseth to touch *them* ;
They are as loathsome meat to me.
8. Oh, that I might have my request ;
And that God would grant *me* the thing that I long for !
9. Even that it would please God to crush me ;
That he would let loose his hand and cut me off !
10. Then should I yet have comfort ;
Yea, I would exult in pain that spareth not ;
For I have not denied the words of the Holy One.
11. What is my strength, that I should wait ?
And what is mine end, that I should be patient ?
12. Is my strength the strength of stones ?
Or is my flesh of brass ?
13. Is it not that I have no help in me,
And that effectual working¹ is driven quite from me ?
14. To him that is ready to faint kindness *should be shewed* from
his friend ;
Even to him that forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.
15. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook,
As the channel of brooks that pass away ;
16. Which are black by reason of the ice,
And wherein the snow hideth itself :
17. What time they wax warm, they vanish ;
When it is hot, they are consumed out of their place.
18. The caravans *that travel* by the way of them turn aside ;
They go up into the waste, and perish.
19. The caravans of Tema looked,
The companies of Sheba waited for them.
20. They were ashamed because they had hoped ;
They came thither, and were confounded.
21. For now ye are nothing ;
Ye see a terror, and are afraid.
22. Did I say, Give unto me ?
Or, Offer a present for me of your substance ?
23. Or, Deliver me from the adversary's hand ?
Or, Redeem me from the hand of the oppressors ?
24. Teach me, and I will hold my peace :
And cause me to understand wherein I have erred.
25. How forcible are words of uprightness !
But what doth your arguing reprove ?
26. Do ye imagine to reprove words ?
Seeing that the speeches of one that is desperate are as wind.
27. Yea, ye would cast *lots* upon the fatherless,
And make merchandise of your friend.
28. Now therefore be pleased to look upon me ;
For surely I shall not lie to your face.

¹ Or "abiding success" (Peake).

29. Return, I pray you, let there be no injustice ;
 Yea, return again, my cause is righteous.
30. Is there injustice on my tongue ?
 Cannot my taste discern mischievous things ?

CHAPTER VII.

1. Is there not a warfare¹ to man upon earth ?
 And are not his days like the days of an hireling ?
2. As a servant that earnestly desireth the shadow,
 And as an hireling that looketh for his wages :
3. So am I made to possess months of vanity,
 And wearisome nights are appointed to me.
4. When I lie down, I say,
 When shall I arise ? but the night is long ;
 And I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the
 day.
5. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust ;
 My skin closeth up and breaketh out afresh.
6. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
 And are spent without hope.
7. Oh, remember that my life is wind :
 Mine eye shall no more see good.
8. The eye of him that seeth me shall behold me no more ;
 Thine eyes shall be upon me, but I shall not be.
9. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away,
 So he that goeth down to Sheol shall come up no more.
10. He shall return no more to his house,
 Neither shall his place know him any more.
11. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth ;
 I will speak in the anguish of my spirit ;
 I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
12. Am I a sea, or a sea-monster,
 That thou settest a watch over me ?
13. When I say, My bed shall comfort me,
 My couch shall ease my complaint ;
14. Then thou scarest me with dreams,
 And terrifiest me through visions :
15. So that my soul chooseth strangling,
 And death rather than *these* my bones.
16. I loathe *my life* ; I would not live alway :
 Let me alone ; for my days are vanity.
17. What is man that thou shouldest magnify him,
 And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him,
18. And that thou shouldest visit him every morning,
 And try him every moment ?
19. How long wilt thou not look away from me
 Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle ?

¹ Or "time of service."

20. If I have sinned what do I unto thee, O thou watcher¹ of men?

Why hast thou set me as a mark for thee,
So that I am a burden to myself?

21. And why dost thou not pardon my transgression and take away mine iniquity?

For now shall I lie down in the dust;
And thou shalt seek me diligently, but I shall not be.

THE transition from Eliphaz to Job marks the contrast between the calm utterance of one who is detached from real life and the impassioned speech of a sufferer. A certain want of connection and pertinence is observable in Eliphaz, for a man who is made up of what he hears and reads always lacks unity and directness. How different is the answer of Job! These sixth and seventh chapters are molten from end to end, and run in one burning stream.²

We shall notice a growing estrangement between Job and his friends, deepening in bitterness as the story proceeds. The sick man knows himself to be slipping from the old security, looks for help, and, accepting Eliphaz as the spokesman of the three, expresses his keen disappointment. They have failed him like the fickle brooks which overflow in the winter and vanish in the summer. His fate has been like that of the caravans looking for the promise of refreshment only to find the bed of the brook a sandy track, and perish miserably in the desert.³ Had he presumed to ask them for a costly gift he might not have been surprised if they had failed him, but he had only claimed the kindness a man in sore need would naturally expect from those who professed to be his friends.⁴ These are

¹ Or "preserver."

³ vi. 15, 20.

² Mark Rutherford.

⁴ vi. 22, 23.

bitter words, and they will provoke equally bitter retorts. They will speak words of disdain and insult to each other till we wonder whether any true friendship existed between them; but it is safe to say that if they had not been friends there would have been no story of Job to tell. It is all true to life. There is no estrangement so painful, no bitterness which so rankles in the heart, as that which can exist between those who really love each other. If there had been no intimate tie, no common memories and hopes, no fellowship of soul between these four people, their relationship would hardly have endured the strain imposed upon it; but whilst they moved on different planes of thought, in heart they were one, and it was the consciousness of their unity which bred the irritation at the very idea of not thinking alike. This was the secret sorrow, the corroding bitterness, the wrath that worked like madness, in the brain of Job and his friends. The difference between them was not, in the first place, fundamental, but a difference of experience. A good man beaten by circumstances is bewildered by a moral problem, whilst his friends (who look at it from outside) try to persuade him that there is no problem at all. They were satisfied that the orthodox explanation of suffering as the consequent of sin covered all cases, and this Job would never have questioned till he was faced by the double consciousness of his own reversal of fortune and the conviction of his innocence. He might have found peace in a servile faith or in giving up in despair, for there is a peace of mind which comes to those who never question anything, and there is a sedative which makes the mind oblivious to all questions of conscience. Job will

not resort to either way of escape. He bravely refuses to accept at the moment, an interpretation of life which had broken down in experience. Failing to perceive that inseparable connection between sin and suffering laid down by tradition, his patience lies in his readiness to endure the darkness of uncertainty and doubt rather than give the lie to life as he sees it.

I.

The smooth rhetoric of Eliphaz goads the sick man to bitter expostulations. Is he taunted with vexation—with feeling mortified by his position? Let the seer weigh that against his pain! Proverbial philosophy has said, “A stone is heavy and the sand weighty; but a fool’s vexation is heavier than them both!”¹ But put his vexation in one balance and his pain in the other, and the latter would be heavier than the sands of the sea. His words have been rash, but he cannot contain himself, and at last he suffers to escape from him a word which is to stand for all that is despairing or hopeful in his prospects. Job names God as the author of all his troubles.² He will think of God in metaphors, which express the whole scale of thought; but now he is obsessed by the sense of a warlike Presence, whose arrows never miss their mark, creating the terror of thronging hosts concentrated on his destruction. No! he is not complaining without a cause.

Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?
Or loweth the ox over his fodder?
Can that which hath no savour be eaten without salt?
Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?

¹ Prov. xxvii. 3.

² vi. 4. The name of God is “Shaddai,” which expresses simply the idea of almightiness.

By these varying metaphors, Job expresses the nauseous discontent which ought to strike his friends as quite a natural thing. Can they expect him to enjoy his suffering and relish that for which he has no taste? The patience of Job is proverbial, but it is no self-conscious virtue with him, and as he thinks of his woeful condition, he is not at all sure that he can bear the strain of it. Were he made of stone or brass he might bear pain with fortitude, but he is no Titan; he is a frail man, on whom rests "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world." He is simply a failure, and at the end of his resources.¹ But Job's attitude belies his own words. No man is at the end of his tether who is willing to learn, and this man cries, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue."² Job is still at school, and there is more hope for the learner than for the men who think they have finished their education. Yet, Eliphaz is a wise teacher, and we wonder why he could not speak those forcible words which the sufferer demands from him.

How forcible are words of uprightness!
But what doth your arguing reprove?³

Job knows that he has spoken like a desperate man, but cannot they improve upon his words, penetrate behind the rash expression of feeling, and take into account the circumstances of the case? No doubt Job is smarting under the misdirected ministrations of a candid friend, but all the time he is seeking to find the reality which language ought to reveal and not conceal. Eliphaz can speak

¹ vi. 11-13. "Effectual working (abiding success) is driven quite from me" (see Peake's *Job*, note on verse 12).

² vi. 24.

³ vi. 25.

truths, but can he speak those words of uprightness which exactly fit the situation? They have made no allowance for the words of a desperate man; judged him word for word, as though he had spoken with calm deliberation, in cold blood. He has only one opinion of their unfeeling behaviour. "Ye make merchandise of your friend." They are nothing but verbal hucksters, who will say anything to bolster up their reputation for wisdom! Let them look him straight in the face, and he will not meet their glance with a lie on his lips.¹ Some have thought that his next words were prompted by a movement on the part of his friends to leave him, stung by his wild reproaches.² "Return, I pray you." Let them not be offended if he has spoken irresponsible words. It is more likely that he begs them to reconsider their judgment; for he has a just cause, and his ravings have not blunted his spiritual perception.

"Cannot my taste discern mischievous things?"³ Job clings to the conviction that there is an inner sense, a spiritual taste, which can be trusted even though it may not harmonise with proverbial philosophy. It is not the prerogative of years, but the gift of the man who keeps his mind open to God, and follows the truth wherever it may lead him.

II.

We shall never do justice to Job if we think of him as self-absorbed or simply describing a circle drawn by his friends. Even now he displays a triumph of mind by a growing consciousness that his own case is not singular, and as he looks with

¹ vi 27-28.

² Renan. Job vi. 29.

³ vi. 30.

new insight at the broad field of human life, he reads its story through his own, and speaks, as he spoke before, as a representative of suffering humanity. Tossing restlessly through the night that never seems to end, he thinks of the hard terms of life imposed upon so many—the long service of the soldier, the hopeless drudgery of the slave.¹ Yet, surely the day of discharge will come, for the longest lane has a turning.

Come what, come may,
Time and the hour runs through the longest day.²

Yes, but to the slave who earnestly desires the shadow of the evening, to the hireling that looketh for his wages, and to the sufferer alike, time often seems to stand still. This is a part of the heavy price of Job's experience, and it induces fine fellow-feeling. There is little consistency in Job's reflections. The next moment he is complaining that life is so short—"swifter than a weaver's shuttle." We must not expect logic from a stricken man, who, in a disordered frenzy, glances from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth, and now turns towards God with a pitiful appeal to remember him and the hopelessness of his outlook.³ Job knows in his heart what his real trouble is. It is not in having unfortunate friends, not even in a loathsome disease, but in the sense of estrangement from his Maker. The future is as black as Sheol; he loses all self-restraint and, in an outburst of feeling, comes perilously near the fulfilment of the Satan's prediction that he will curse God to His face. He does

¹ vii. 1. Margin R.V.: "Is there not a time of service upon earth?"

² *Macbeth*, i. 3.

³ vii. 7-10 are addressed, not to Eliphaz, but to God.

not do so. Job may affirm that in his plight it is better not to live, but never does he think that if you have to live it is better to be bad than good. The reverence which lies deep in his nature prompts him now to make excuse for his delirious words;¹ but at a moment when he hopes nothing from God and thinks he will soon have no more to fear from Him, he speaks out with a directness, an incisive bitterness which betrays a spirit of desperation :

Am I a sea, or a sea-monster,
That thou settest a watch over me?

Let me alone ; for my days are vanity.
What is man that thou shouldest magnify him,
And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him,
And that thou shouldest visit him every morning,
And try him every moment ?²

A poet once gazed into the liquid depths of the sky starred with glory, and, as the moonlit splendour sank into his soul, it seemed to cast a reflection on his own insignificance : What is a man that thou art mindful of him ? Yet, as he gazed, his spirit rose within him, for he knew that he was greater than the heavens which seemed to dwarf him. They declare without speaking, "the hand that made us is Divine," but man alone is conscious of it, man alone possesses the organ of praise ; for, made in the image of God,

Thou hast put all things under his lordly feet,
All flocks and herds, by thy commanding word,
All beasts that in the field or forest meet,
Fowl of the heavens, and fish that through the wet
Sea-path in shoals do slide, and know no dearth.
O Jehovah our Lord, how wondrous great
And glorious is thy name through all the earth.³

¹ Chapter vii. 11: "I speak in the anguish of my spirit."

² Ps. viii.

³ See Milton's paraphrase of Ps. viii.

How different is the mood of Job ! His words have been called " a bitter parody of the Psalmist." ¹ No doubt they are. We see the lord of creation laid low like a fallen Cæsar, " and none so poor to do him reverence." Yet his spirit survives. Abject and loathsome, he can still think and wonder. Whilst he cannot doubt that God is having mysterious dealings with him, the wonder is that there should be any Divine concern for such a frail creature. Is he worth it ? If he had been a sea or a whale it might have been needful to watch him, for the turbulent sea, fretting against its limits, needs the curb of a Divine decree ; the sea-monster must be closely confined ; but is it not magnifying man unduly, making altogether too much of him, to scare him with dreams and visions, to beset him behind and before and lay an afflicting hand upon him ? In the distraction of his mind Job has lost all sense of proportion. What has size to do with the measure of life ?

It is not growing like a tree
 In bulk doth make man better be ;
 Or standing long an oak three hundred year,
 To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere ;
 A lily of a day
 Is fairer far in May
 Although it fall and die that night ;
 It was the plant and flower of light :
 In small proportions we great beauties see ;
 And in short measure life may perfect be. ²

Job is not in any mood for calm reflection. A Goethe, wrapt in the calm contemplation of Nature on the top of the Brocken, may quote the Psalmist's words without losing the sense of his own individuality ; even the disordered mind of a Hamlet

¹ Cheyne.

² Ben Jonson, *On Sir Henry Monson*. (Underwoods.)

may think of a man at the same moment as "the quintessence of dust" and "the paragon of animals";¹ but as long as Job thinks of God and his own identity merely in terms of greatness and littleness, he cannot rise to the thought of any higher relation. The day will come when the sense of never being out of God's presence will be thought of as more wonderful than painful. "If I climb up into heaven thou art there: if I go down to Sheol thou art there also," cried one who was glad to think that wherever he was he could never be God's outlaw;² and Job will respond to the same sentiment when the fear of a besetting God as cold omniscience has faded away. But, as yet, he cannot shake off the gloom of his soul. Whilst thinking of God exclusively on the physical side of life, his distorted imagination conceives that he is always getting (so to speak) in God's way, for wherever he may be and however anxiously he seeks to avoid contact with Him, there is a Presence always striking against him.³ Language could hardly be more daring, but, whilst Job's spirit is reckless, all the time, he expresses that sympathetic union with his fellow-men which makes an exceeding bitter cry vocal with the pains and aspirations of mankind.

III.

At this moment Job surprises us (as he will often do) with a turn of thought which will deeply affect the course of this story. The God who is the spectre of his imagination, who spies upon him

¹ Act ii., Scene 2.

² Ps. cxxxix.

³ Chapter vii. 20: "Why hast thou set me as a mark for thee?" The word "mark" here is not a target as elsewhere (xvi. 12), but something against which one strikes.

with a maddening espionage, fades away in a vision of One who will one day come to think of His servant more tenderly and seek to renew the old communion.

And why dost thou not pardon my transgression and take
away mine iniquity?

For now shall I lie down in the dust ;

And thou shalt seek me diligently, but I shall not be.¹

If he be a sinner, why should not God forgive him? What is the significance of torturing a life so soon to end? For whilst he will die, God will not remain in His present mood. He will think on His servant once more in love as in the days of old, and seek to renew the old communion. The fact that it will be too late does not rob the sweetness from the thought of a God of grace whose mercy will triumph over His wrath. This suggestion of a dualism in God—as He appears to Job in the present and as he knew Him in the past—will create Job's greatest errors and lead to some discoveries. The conflict between these two ideas will complicate the whole story until it works out towards a solution in which all contradictions are lost in a true vision of God.

¹ vii. 21.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAXIMS OF BILDAD; OR, THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS MISAPPLIED

There is an essential difference between the reason and the understanding—between a principle and a maxim—an eternal truth and a mere conclusion generalised from a great number of facts. A man, having seen a million moss-roses all red, concludes from his own experience and that of others that all moss-roses are red. That is a maxim with him—the greatest amount of his knowledge upon the subject. But it is only true until some gardener has produced a white moss-rose—after which the maxim is good for nothing.—COLERIDGE: *Table Talk*, August 24, 1831.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
2. How long wilt thou speak these things?
And *how long* shall the words of thy mouth be *like* a mighty wind?
3. Doth God pervert judgement?
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?
4. If thy children have sinned against him,
And he have delivered them into the hand of their transgression:
5. If thou wouldest seek diligently unto God,
And make thy supplication to the Almighty;
6. If thou wert pure and upright;
Surely now he would awake for thee,
And make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.
7. And though thy beginning was small;
Yet thy latter end should greatly increase.
8. For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age,
And apply thyself to that which their fathers have searched out:
9. (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing,
Because our days upon earth are a shadow:)
10. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee,
And utter words out of their heart?
11. Can the rush grow up without mire?
Can the flag grow without water?
12. Whilst it is yet in its greenness, *and* not cut down,
It withereth before any *other* herb.

13. So are the paths of all that forget God ;
And the hope of the godless man shall perish :
14. Whose confidence shall break in sunder,
And whose trust is a spider's web.
15. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand :
He shall hold fast thereby, but it shall not endure.
16. He is green before the sun,
And his shoots go forth over his garden.
17. His roots are wrapped about the heap,
He beholdeth the place of stones.
18. If he be destroyed from his place,
Then it shall deny him, *saying*, I have not seen thee.
19. Behold, this is the joy of his way,
And out of the earth shall others spring.
20. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man,
Neither will he uphold the evil-doers.
21. He will yet fill thy mouth with laughter,
And thy lips with shouting.
22. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame ;
And the tent of the wicked shall be no more.

CHAPTER IX.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. Of a truth I know that it is so ;
But how can man be just with God ?
3. If he be pleased to contend with him,
He cannot answer him one of a thousand.
4. *He is* wise in heart, and mighty in strength :
Who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered ?
5. Which removeth the mountains, and they know it not
When he overturneth them in his anger.
6. Which shaketh the earth out of her place,
And the pillars thereof tremble.
7. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not :
And sealeth up the stars.
8. Which alone stretcheth out the heavens,
And treadeth upon the waves of the sea.
9. Which maketh the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades,
And the chambers of the south.
10. Which doeth great things past finding out ;
Yea, marvellous things without number.
11. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not :
He passeth on also, but I perceive him not.
12. Behold, he seizeth *the prey*, who can hinder him ?
Who will say unto him, What doest thou ?
13. God will not withdraw his anger ;
The helpers of Rahab do stoop under him,
14. How much less shall I answer him,
And choose out my words *to reason* with him ?

15. Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer ;
I would make supplication to mine adversary.
16. If I had called, and he had answered me ;
Yet would I not believe that he hearkened unto my voice.
17. For he breaketh me with a tempest,
And multiplieth my wounds without cause.
18. He will not suffer me to take my breath,
But filleth me with bitterness.
19. If *we speak* of the strength of the mighty, lo, *he is there !*
And if of judgement, who will appoint me a time ?
20. Though I be righteous, mine own mouth shall condemn me :
Though I be perfect, it shall prove me perverse.
21. I am perfect ; I regard not myself ;
I despise my life.
22. It is all one ; therefore I say,
He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.
23. If the scourge slay suddenly,
He will mock at the trial of the innocent.
24. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked :
He covereth the faces of the judges thereof ;
If *it be* not *he*, who then is it ?
25. Now my days are swifter than a post :
They flee away, they see no good.
26. They are passed away as the swift ships :
As the eagle that swoopeth on the prey.
27. If I say, I will forget my complaint,
I will put off my *sad* countenance, and be of good cheer :
28. I am afraid of all my sorrows,
I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.
29. I shall be condemned ;
Why then do I labour in vain ?
30. If I wash myself with snow water,
And make my hands never so clean ;
31. Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch,
And mine own clothes shall abhor me.
32. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him,
That we should come together in judgement.
33. There is no daysman betwixt us,
That might lay his hand upon us both.
34. Let him take his rod away from me,
And let not his terror make me afraid :
35. Then would I speak, and not fear him ;
For I am not so in myself.

CHAPTER X.

1. My soul is weary of my life ;
I will give free course to my complaint ;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
2. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ;
Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.

3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress,
That thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands,
And shine upon the counsel of the wicked?
4. Hast thou eyes of flesh,
Or seest thou as man seeth?
5. Are thy days as the days of man,
Or thy years as man's days,
6. That thou inquirest after mine iniquity,
And searchest after my sin,
7. Although thou knowest that I am not wicked;
And there is none that can deliver out of thine hand?
8. Thine hands have framed me and fashioned me
Together round about; yet thou dost destroy me.
9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast fashioned me as clay;
And wilt thou bring me into dust again?
10. Hast thou not poured me out as milk,
And curdled me like cheese?
11. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh,
And knit me together with bones and sinews.
12. Thou hast granted me life and favour,
And thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.
13. Yet these things thou didst hide in thine heart;
I know that this *is* with thee;
14. If I sin, then thou markest me,
And thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.
15. If I be wicked, woe unto me;
And if I be righteous, yet shall I not lift up my head;
Being filled with ignominy
And looking upon mine affliction.
16. And if *my head* exalt itself, thou huntest me as a lion;
And again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me.
17. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me,
And increasest thine indignation upon me;
Changes and warfare are with me.
18. Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?
I had given up the ghost and no eye had seen me.
19. I should have been as though I had not been;
I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.
20. Are not my days few? cease then,
And let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,
21. Before I go whence I shall not return,
Even to the land of darkness and of the shadow of death;
22. A land of thick darkness, as darkness *itself*;
A land of the shadow of death, without any order,
And where the light is as darkness.

WHILST the prophet and the priest have exercised their ministry, there has been a quiet, thoughtful

man following in their track collecting the conclusions of history in the form of maxims. The experience of the past enabled men to infer general truths, which became fixed moral principles not to be set aside by any independent opinion, so that a proverb of the ancients came to be regarded as the last word on the subject, and served, "not only for ornament and delight, but also for active and civil use; as being the edge tools of speech which cut and penetrate the knots of business and affairs."¹ The secret of many a man's stubbornness when beaten in an argument, of much complacency in the face of mystery, the only philosophy which did not seem to fail in the hour of need, was faith in the inspiration of some venerable saying which carried all the weight of a Divine revelation. So satisfying are such maxims to people of all classes in all ages that it seems as though that quiet, thoughtful man following in the track of the prophet and the priest has exercised even a greater influence than the religious teacher. But this ministry has distinct limits and may easily be misapplied. When it is exercised without regard to the circumstances of each case it may illustrate the short-sightedness far more than the wisdom of man, and this is why smooth explanations of life are so irritating, why "all people of broad, strong sense have an instinctive repugnance to the men of maxims; because such people discern that the mysterious complexity of our life is not to be embraced by maxims, and that to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all the Divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing insight and sympathy."²

¹ Bacon.

² George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, Book VII., chapter ii.

I.

If Eliphaz the Temanite is a man almost of prophetic rank, Bildad the Shuhite is a representative of the wise man who quotes rather than says anything original. He rests his arguments on what he believes to be an immemorial tradition—the collective wisdom of mankind—a complete Bible which needs no commentary. He has nothing to say for himself—"we are but of yesterday and know nothing."¹ It is not quite clear on what principle Bildad considers the wisdom of the ancients to be superior to that of his own time. Bacon calls the wisdom of the past² "true touchstone of the mind of mystery," but that did not prevent him exploring everywhere for fuller knowledge of the facts of life. If Bildad is the heir of the ages, then he should be richer in experience than the fathers; but he may think that whilst they drank from the fount of wisdom, the stream became more corrupt as it flowed through the channel of time. Whatever he thinks, his conviction that the past has told us everything, and that there is nothing fresh to learn, makes him impatient of Job's critical attitude to life. Addressing himself to the general drift of his speech, Bildad expresses his astonishment that he could say such things: "windy rhetoric" he calls it.³ Does Job know what he is saying? He implies that God can be unjust: he—a man of yesterday—pits his own opinion against all the teaching of history that God never fails to discriminate between the evil and the good. If his children have perished through their own sin, still God will have mercy upon him if he

¹ viii. 9.² *The Wisdom of the Ancients.*³ viii. 2.

diligently seeks Him, and his latter end will be better than the beginning. The sum of human experience can be expressed in a few words culled from the store of Egyptian wisdom.

Can the rush¹ grow up without mire?
 Can the flag grow without water?
 Whilst it is yet in the greenness and not cut down,
 It withereth before any other herb.
 So are the paths of all that forget God.

Without God's blessing life has no permanence—"The likeness of those who take to themselves patrons beside God is as the likeness of the spider who taketh to herself a house, and verily the frailest of houses is the spider's house—if they did but know."² The wicked may spread himself like a green tree rooted in its native soil, yet, however it may seem to thrive, it will be destroyed without leaving a trace behind.³ But "behold, God will not cast away a perfect man."⁴ "The confidence of Bildad upon this point is very remarkable," says Mark Rutherford. "It must have been based upon something. Such a creed, whether the result of observation or the conclusions of a philosophy, did not grow up without some root—it represents the great discovery that the powers of history and the world are in the long run on the side of good and against wickedness—a faith in moral government which was a tradition even at this early date and has survived the contradictions of experience."⁵ To Job, with his blurred vision, the God whom he used to worship has become an unreasoning, pitiless power, and Bildad recalls him to the real issue

¹ The "rush" is the papyrus, and the "flag" is the Nile reed.

² viii. 14. See the Koran, chapter xxix., "The Spider."

³ viii. 16-18.

⁴ viii. 20.

⁵ *Notes on the Book of Job.*

which is at stake in all his perplexities: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? But we have already noticed that a great truth, seen out of proportion and relation to other truths, may have a narrowing, hardening influence on the mind. Bildad's first principle that, in spite of all anomalies, there is a Law over all making for righteousness is eternally true, but he is wrong in affirming, as Job is right in denying, that all suffering can be explained through the direct self-evident operation of that law. Bildad is mistaken in supposing that this is the only principle on which life is governed, leaves no margin for discovery in the light of experience, and cannot see that a new need may be even greater than a precedent. Notwithstanding these defects, Bildad concludes his speech in a happy manner, assuring Job that his friends still believe in him, wish him well, and in spite of all shadows augur for him a brilliant future.

II.

There is nothing in Bildad's speech which rouses scorn or reproach: "Of a truth I know that it is so."¹ Job assents to the wise man's conclusion as a general principle, for he is under no delusion about himself and the alternative which faces him: it is faith in the hallowed glory of that creed, or the lonely mystery of existence. But for him there seems to be no choice. If all suffering be penal, then the sense of justice in God is something very different from his own consciousness of it. But what is the use of raising the point? for he could not answer "one of a thousand" of the questions with which God in His infinite wisdom might retort.² A modern

¹ ix. 1.

² ix. 4.

thinker¹ has tried to explain the mysterious sense of justice in the heart of man apart from the existence of a holy, omnipotent God. We are all, more or less, controlled by a strange, vague faith in the justice of things, though Nature, society, and common experience are full of injustice done with impunity. The only sanction for this sense of justice is to be found in the moral life of every man, and we must rest satisfied that, although force reigns in the world, equity dwells in the heart. Such a conclusion could not satisfy Job, for he cannot dissociate the idea of a moral standard within from the law of God.² He may be tempted to do so, but in the lowest abyss of alienation from his Maker he will never think for long that he is fighting his battle alone. The sense of injustice so grows upon him that we shall appear to be listening to the reckless language of a King Lear grappling with implacable forces, but Job will never believe that he is at the mercy of a force to which he cannot appeal. Wrestling like Jacob with an unknown Presence too strong for him, in a horror of darkness, maimed and prostrate, he will still cry out, "Tell me thy name. Art thou friend or foe?" No answer comes, and the silence breeds the darkest suspicion of God. He can only see Him in the earthquake, the eclipse of the sun, planting His footsteps in the sea and riding upon the storm.³ His ways with man are irresponsible, subtle, and elusive.

Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not :
He passeth on also, but I perceive him not.⁴

¹ Maeterlinck, *The Buried Temple*, "The Mystery of Justice."

² See Mozley's Essay on Job's Sense of Justice, *Historical and Theological Essays*, Vol. II.

³ ix. 5-8.

⁴ ix. 11.

Who can say unto Him, "What doest thou?" There rises a vision of the sea (never quite absent from Job's mind) in its surging strength, lashing its waves in impotent fury against the decrees of God: "The helpers of Rahab do stoop under him."¹ If those mighty powers were crushed by Divine omnipotence, how would he come off from a contest with Him? In the memory of happier days, Job recalled how simple justice was dealt out to all classes without fear or favour;² but now he can only think that a travesty of justice is being perpetrated. Even if he were summoned before a higher tribunal the terror of the Divine Majesty would break down the self-possession needed to state his case; for the Accuser is also the Judge, setting up His own standard of right and accountable to none.³ Job has no hope of any good result from a court which he thinks would be an inquisition; in fact, he has a presentiment that when put to such torture he might confess what in his heart he knew to be false—yes! he, an innocent man, would stammer out "Guilty!"⁴ Recoiling from the thought of renouncing the honour which is more to him than life, he seizes the present moment to assert the plea of guiltlessness; but to one who can see no moral order in the world "it is all one"⁵ whether he speaks or is silent, whether he survives the ordeal or sinks under it.

¹ ix. 13. Rahab (Isa. li. 9) is "the dragon" and (Job xxvi. 12) "the sea." The helpers are the brood of monsters who assist in the primeval conflict with Heaven (Peake).

² xxix. 14.

³ This legal situation is expressed in chapter ix. 14-23.

⁴ ix. 20.

⁵ ix. 22.

III.

This is another moment when we expect the Satan's prediction to be fulfilled: Job will surely repudiate all religious faith. But the worst does not happen, and words escape him which seem to show what it was which averted the catastrophe. Whilst he is pouring out the bitterness of his heart, thoughts flash on the midnight of the soul, which show the true endowments of the spirit standing out plainly from all that is false. His bewilderment finds expression in the sudden question: If it be not he, then who is it?¹ The very strictness of Job's monotheism makes the problem of evil so baffling and tormenting. Schooled as he has been to trace everything to the immediate action of God, he has no Satan, no scientific secondary causes, no involved scheme of Providence to help him to solve the riddle of the Universe; and the mere asking of this question clearly proves that Job finds no rest in his dark conclusions. It is a real grief to him to attribute injustice to One who had once stood for all that was sacred in his life. It is also noticeable that he has no satisfaction in transferring to God human failings, like a natural theology which goes all astray when it proceeds to build up the notion of Deity from its own pattern. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."² A Caliban³ thinks of his god Setebos in this fashion:

He is terrible ; watch his feats in proof !
 One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
 He hath a spite against me that I know.

Caliban is spiteful, and so he thinks that his god is prompted by the same petty feeling, but Job is in

¹ ix. 24.

² Ps. l., v. 21.

³ R. Browning, *Caliban upon Setebos*.

no danger of thinking of Deity as an enlarged edition of himself. His whole trouble is that God is far too remote from his life to be capable of entering into human experience. "He is not a man as I am."¹ Yet, whilst he is saying this, all the time he is blindly seeking for some common ground of understanding. "There is no daysman betwixt us"²—no umpire to lay his hand upon both disputants and see fair play. It is a bold thought even in this negative form. If God were only approachable or, failing that, if there were a third party who could understand both the Divine and human standpoints, then justice might be done. It is a vague yet fascinating idea, and Job will brood upon it till it leads him far towards the truth; for the human heart yearns for the human in God, and nothing else will save Job from that nameless dread which makes him feel less than a man. Meanwhile he is saved from renouncing God, even when he seems to despair of Him, by his loyalty to the moral law within, his instinctive aversion to low ideas of God, and a simple confession of his need for closer relations with Him.

IV.

One of the boldest pioneers in the search for truth in the Middle Ages³ tells that in the course of his wanderings he found himself at the mouth of a huge cavern wrapped in impenetrable darkness. He was moved by diverse emotions, fear and desire—fear of the dark, desire to see whether the cavern contained any treasure. So Job stood peering into

¹ ix. 32.

² ix. 33.

³ Leonardo da Vinci. *Notebooks*, edited by McCurdy, p. 135.

the unknown, torn by conflicting feelings of fear and longing to know more. What lies in the darkness? Perhaps destruction; perhaps some great discovery. Shall he enter, or shall he run no risks? Then, taking his life into his hands, we see him plunge into the cavern.¹ He does not seem at first to rise above the monotony of complaint, but he is groping for light, searching for it in the nature of God Himself by hazardous suppositions as to what there is in the Divine character which can explain the mystery of suffering. As each supposition refutes itself by a self-evident contradiction of the Divine nature, we see how much Job is still sure of God. He may not know what God is doing with him, but he knows that there are some things He cannot do. "Is it becoming to thee that thou shouldst oppress?"² At the outset of his trouble Job could not attribute anything unseemly to God, and he cannot do so now in spite of his moral bewilderment. Each possibility is turned over before it is rejected.³ "Hast thou eyes of flesh?" Could God mistake a saint for a sinner simply because appearances were against him? "Are thy days as the days of man?" Is God so shortlived that He must seize an occasion to punish Job, even before he is guilty, lest His victim should ultimately slip through His hands? Away with such thoughts, unworthy of God, false to his own better reason! But not a ray of light penetrates the gloom of the cavern.

There is a familiar scene in daily life which aptly illustrates Job's helplessness. How passive is the clay in the hands of the potter, who turns and twists

¹ Chapter x.

² x. 3. "Is it good (becoming)?" Compare this with an earlier passage (i. 22).

³ x. 4-7.

it to any shape he chooses! Job pictures the familiar details the prophet Jeremiah has described in his visit to the potter's house,¹ but he does not draw the prophet's conclusions. The prophet saw a vessel marred in the hand of the potter, not through any slip of the potter's thumb, but through a flaw in the material; yet the potter is not baffled, and, instead of flinging the misshapen clay on the rubbish heap, he kneads it afresh and completes the original design. It was the vision of Rabbi ben Ezra:²

So take and use Thy work :
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth and death complete the same.

Job cannot share this hope. As he recalls the lavish care God has taken in fashioning him from infancy to maturity, he fights against the dark idea that all this attention marked a sinister design to destroy him; yet the agonising conviction grows upon him that it must be so.³ Is not God everywhere against him, crushing him the moment he attempts to lift his head? It seems an incredible conclusion, a denial of all faith in the reasonableness of God's work, that He should create only to destroy; but to the darkened soul such a predestination is not impossible, and gloomy theologies have been framed by the same defective reasoning. Job's friends, with their cold theories and misapplied maxims, do not help him, and he does not know where his thoughts may be

¹ x. 8-12. (See Jer. xviii. and Wisdom of Solomon xv.)

² Robert Browning, *Dramatis Personæ*.

³ Chapter x. 13-17 expresses what Job thinks was all the time in God's mind.

leading him ; yet he ventures, even now, to ask one last boon : cannot he have a little easing of his pain before the end comes ?

Are not my days few ? cease then,
And let me alone, that I may take comfort a little.¹

This act of mercy will bring a little brightness into his life before he passes into the land "where the light is as darkness." This appeal to a tenderness in God proves the latent consciousness in Job's mind that, in spite of what he has said, the Divine dealings with him are not final, and leaves room for unexpected developments in his story.

¹ x. 20. The Septuagint reads : "Let me alone that I may brighten up" ("be of good cheer," Job ix. 27). The same thought is expressed in Ps. xxxix. 13.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMMONSENSE OF ZOPHAR AND THE VENTURE OF JOB

"What do you believe," I asked, "father ; really, I mean?" The night had fallen. My father put his arm round me and drew me to him. "That we are God's children, little brother," he answered ; "that what He wills for us is best. It may be life, it may be sleep ; it will be best. I cannot think that He will let us die ; that were to think of Him as without purpose. But His uses may not be our desires. We must trust Him. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.'"—JEROME K. JEROME : *Paul Kelter*.

CHAPTER XI.

1. Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,
2. Should not the multitude of words be answered ?
And should a man full of talk be justified ?
3. Should thy boastings make men hold their peace ?
And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed ?
4. For thou sayest, My doctrine is pure,
And I am clean in thine eyes.
5. But Oh, that God would speak,
And open his lips against thee ;
6. And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom,
That it is manifold in effectual working !
Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine
iniquity deserveth.
7. Canst thou by searching find out God ?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?
8. It is high as heaven ; what canst thou do ?
Deeper than Sheol ; what canst thou know ?
9. The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea.
10. If he pass through, and shut up,
And call unto judgement, then who can hinder him ?
11. For he knoweth vain men :
He seeth iniquity also, even though he consider it not.
12. But vain man is void of understanding,
Yea, man is born as a wild ass's colt.
13. If thou set thine heart aright,
And stretch out thine hands toward him ;
14. If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away,

- And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents ;
15. Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot ;
Yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear ;
16. For thou shalt forget thy misery ;
Thou shalt remember it as waters that are passed away ;
17. And *thy* life shall be clearer than the noonday ;
Though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning.
18. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope ;
Yea, thou shalt search *about thee*, and shalt take thy rest in safety.
19. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid ;
Yea, many shall make suit unto thee :
20. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail,
And they shall have no way to flee,
And their hope shall be the giving up of the ghost.

CHAPTER XII.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. No doubt but ye are the people,
And wisdom shall die with you.
3. But I have understanding as well as you ;
I am not inferior to you :
Yea, who knoweth not such things as these ?
4. I am as one that is a laughing-stock to his neighbour,
A man that called upon God, and he answered him :
The just, the perfect man is a laughing-stock.
5. In the thought of him that is at ease there is contempt for
misfortune ;
It is ready for them whose foot slippeth.
6. The tents of robbers prosper,
And they that provoke God are secure ;
Into whose hand God bringeth *abundantly*.
7. But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee ;
And the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee :
8. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee ;
And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.
9. Who knoweth not in all these
That the hand of the Lord hath wrought this ?
10. In whose hand is the soul of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind.
11. Doth not the ear try words,
Even as the palate tasteth its meat ?
12. With aged men is wisdom,
And in length of days understanding.
13. With him is wisdom and might ;
He hath counsel and understanding.
14. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again ;
He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.

15. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up ;
Again, he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.
16. With him is strength and effectual working ;
The deceived and the deceiver are his.
17. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled,
And judges maketh he fools.
18. He looseth the bond of kings,
And bindeth their loins with a girdle.
19. He leadeth priests away spoiled,
And overthroweth the mighty.
20. He removeth the speech of the trusty,
And taketh away the understanding of the elders.
21. He poureth contempt upon princes,
And looseth the belt of the strong.
22. He discovereth deep things out of darkness,
And bringeth out to light the shadow of death.
23. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them :
He spreadeth the nations abroad, and bringeth them in.
24. He taketh away the heart of the chiefs of the people of the earth,
And causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.
25. They grope in the dark without light,
And he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. Lo, mine eye hath seen all *this*,
Mine ear hath heard and understood it.
2. What ye know, *the same* do I know also :
I am not inferior unto you.
3. Surely I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to reason with God.
4. But ye are forgers of lies,
Ye are all physicians of no value.
5. Oh, that ye would altogether hold your peace !
And it should be your wisdom.
6. Hear now my reasoning,
And hearken to the pleadings of my lips.
7. Will ye speak unrighteously for God,
And talk deceitfully for him ?
8. Will ye respect his person ?
Will ye contend for God ?
9. Is it good that he should search you out ?
Or as one deceiveth a man, will ye deceive him ?
10. He will surely reprove you,
If ye do secretly respect persons.
11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid,
And his dread fall upon you ?
12. Your memorable sayings *are* proverbs of ashes,
Your defences *are* defences of clay.

13. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak,
And let come on me what will.
14. Wherefore should I take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in mine hand?
15. Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him :
Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him.
16. This also shall be my salvation ;
For a godless man shall not come before him.
17. Hear diligently my speech,
And let my declaration be in your ears.
18. Behold now, I have ordered my cause ;
I know that I am righteous.¹
19. Who is he that will contend with me ?
For now shall I hold my peace and give up the ghost.
20. Only do not two things unto me,
Then will I not hide myself from thy face :
21. Withdraw thine hand far from me ;
And let not thy terror make me afraid.
22. Then call thou, and I will answer ;
Or let me speak, and answer thou me.
23. How many are mine iniquities and sins ?
Make me to know my transgression and my sin.
24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And holdest me for thine enemy ?
25. Wilt thou harass a driven leaf ?
And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble ?
26. For thou writest bitter things against me,
And makest me to inherit the iniquities of my youth :
27. Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and markest all my paths ;
Thou drawest thee a line about the soles of my feet :
28. Though I am like a rotten thing that consumeth,
Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

CHAPTER XIV.

1. Man that is born of a woman
Is of few days, and full of trouble.
2. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down :
He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.
3. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one,
And bringest me into judgement with thee ?
4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one.
5. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months is
with thee,
And thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass ;
6. Look away from him, that he may rest,
Till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

¹ Margin : " Shall be justified."

7. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
8. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
And the stock thereof die in the ground ;
9. Yet through the scent of water it will bud,
And put forth boughs like a plant.
10. But man dieth, and wasteth away :
Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?
11. As the waters fail from the sea,
And the river decayeth and drieth up ;
12. So man lieth down and riseth not :
Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake,
Nor be roused out of their sleep.
13. Oh, that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol,
That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past,
That thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember me !
14. If a man die, shall he live *again* ?
All the days of my warfare would I wait,
Till my release should come.
15. Thou shouldest call, and I would answer thee :
Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thine hands.
16. But now thou numberest my steps :
Dost thou not watch over my sin ?
17. My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And thou fastenest up mine iniquity.
18. And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought,
And the rock is removed out of its place ;
19. The waters wear the stones ;
The overflowings thereof wash away the dust of the earth :
And thou destroyest the hope of man.
20. Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth ;
Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away.
21. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not ;
And they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.
22. But his flesh upon him hath pain,
And his soul within him mourneth.

ZOPHAR the Naamathite enters upon the scene after Job had denied his guilt with a vehemence which seemed to demand a more direct rebuke from his listeners ; but Zophar is hardly fitted to do it, for, with intellectual gifts of a high order, he has a bluntness of speech which will rouse the worst feelings in Job. He is just the man to take a hammer and hit a nail on the head, but the last person to do

a delicate piece of moral surgery—probe a sensitive conscience, remove the source of irritation, and tenderly bind up the wound. All Job's friends professed to be able to do that, but the least competent was Zophar, who most of all lowered the argument to a vulgar personal level. Before Zophar spoke, Job was feeling that his sorrow had raised a moral problem which somewhat redeemed the repulsive features of the situation, but Zophar's ruthless realism reminded him that he was simply "a man of talk."¹ He might have accepted this valuation. "It is quite true," he might have said. "What is the use of deceiving myself, of investing my trouble with the importance of a world problem? I am simply a man beaten by circumstances who had better make the most of a heap of ashes, and be thankful that out of the wreck of my fortune I have a potsherd with which to scrape myself!"

It was one thing to feel like that, another thing to believe it; and because Job protested in grand remonstrance against such an abject conclusion, he lives to-day, showing man at his lowest and highest, at his worst and best, conquered and unconquerable, mortal and immortal.

I.

The two preceding speakers had assumed that Job's principles were identical with their own, and hoped by judicious reasoning to win his consent to their conclusion. Zophar seems to act on a different assumption. He regards Job more as a heretic, and is profoundly shocked both by his air of self-righteousness and his religious opinions.

Job's contention that God afflicts a man whom He

¹ xi. 2.

knows to be righteous is a daring novelty in the school to which Zophar belonged, and he will not entertain it for a moment; yet he has a glimpse of a wisdom beyond his own, and only just misses making an important contribution to the argument:

Oh, that God would speak,
And open his lips against thee;
And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom,
That it is manifold in effectual working!¹

What a revelation might have been disclosed to him if Zophar had followed out that idea for himself! It was just what Job longed for—to meet God, to know the Divine wisdom, wrapped in “many folds,” concealing the unfathomable mystery of Providence. Zophar seems on the verge of saying that the Divine method can never be fully explained by traditional orthodoxy, but he does not say it, and, with no room in his mind for wider views, simply enforces his own opinion by uttering the hardest condemnation of his friend which he has yet heard. Zophar is confident that he knows what would happen if God did speak to Job; He would show him that his sufferings were not commensurate with his guilt.² After this staggering statement, we do not expect anything better from Zophar, but he can be inspired to eloquence on the theme of the Divine omniscience—higher than heaven, deeper than Sheol, broader than the sea! How can man pit himself against the all-seeing range of the Divine wisdom? Zophar strikes a profound note, but he spoils the music by that descent to the proverbial which gives him the opportunity to be personal,

¹ xi. 5. Effectual working (v. 12; vi. 13)—abiding success (new Oxford Lexicon).

² xi. 6: “Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.”

even coarse, in his application to Job. It may be that we have not caught his meaning, but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he thought of Job as an incurable case: "An empty man will get understanding when a wild ass's colt is born a man."¹

Even if we put the best construction on these words, Zophar evidently regards Job as something of an Ishmael, born for strife and controversy, revelling in a liberty of thought and speech which needs to be curbed; and though his peroration is a beautiful picture of restored fellowship with God, reminding us of the rosy future predicted by Eliphaz, it has an acid touch Eliphaz left out, and it is all so beside the mark when we realise the situation of the man who had to listen to it.

II.

We notice a growing irritation in Job, for "it is with men as with trees; if you lop off their finest branches, into which they were pouring their young life-juice, the wounds will be healed over with some rough boss, some odd excrescence; and what might have been a grand tree expanding into liberal shade is but a whimsical, misshapen trunk. Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plentiful being."²

Job begins to feel keenly that his friends are taking advantage of his position to repeat common-

¹ xi. 12 (margin)—*i.e.*, never (*e.g.*, when pigs fly). Those who put a better construction on the words read: "An empty man may get understanding, and a wild ass's colt be born a man."

² George Eliot, *Scenes from Clerical Life*: "Mr. Gilfil's Story."

places they would never have thought of inflicting upon him in better days. All this proverbial teaching is elementary to a man of his experience, and he cannot help giving sarcastic expression to his feelings:

No doubt but ye are the people,
And wisdom shall die with you.¹

But what is the wisdom worth to him? In what respect, pray, is he inferior to his friends? Are they recipients of revelation? So am I; a man that called upon God and He answered him.² Are they acquainted with the wisdom of antiquity? So am I—with an ear to hear the value of it.³ Are they able to soar to heights of eloquence in describing the glory of God? I, too, can describe the wisdom and power of Him who overthrows the mightiest and turns their wisdom into folly.⁴ Why, the wisdom which his friends have been so patiently teaching him is so rudimentary that the lower creation possesses it. Go to the school of nature, "speak to the earth, the fishes of the sea," and you will learn that the wisdom and power of God everywhere prevail.⁵ But of what account are all these generalities in the face of such a problem as his! The real issue is not, Has God power and wisdom? but, Does He use them for moral ends? All else is irrelevant. It is in this speech that Job for the first time seriously addressed himself to his friends, and we see how easily the whole subject might have been lowered into a personal quarrel. He will speak bitter words and receive bitter retorts,

¹ xii. 2.

² xii. 4.

³ xii. 11.

⁴ xii. 13-25.

⁵ xii. 8. It is not of any secret wisdom possessed by animals, as in folklore, that Job is speaking, but a knowledge universally diffused, accessible to all God's creatures (Peake).

but the situation will be redeemed from the personal element by Job's persistent appeal from man to God, by rising above temporary conditions to face the moral and spiritual issue at stake. Not before self-appointed champions of truth, but before God Himself he will stand or fall. This is the secret of his independence. When Job proceeds to give us his own view of God, in nature and history, we see how distorted his judgment may be; but it comes from a man who cannot compromise, cannot juggle with facts as he sees them, who is at cross-purposes with his friends, because they are content with half-truths which conceal the truth. He is now about to break with them and trust himself to God alone, to loosen all moorings and launch out into the darkness; but he is guided by one star—that, in spite of the contradictions of experience, God is on the side of truth. He knows instinctively that God does not want anyone to "talk deceitfully for Him"¹ in order to vindicate His ways with men. His friends seem to be doing that, and it tempts Job to use strong language: "Ye are forgers of lies and physicians of no value."² "Should we lie to God, and that to our own thoughts?" asks Coleridge.³ "They, indeed, who dare do the one will soon be able to do the other. So did the comforters of Job." Both Job and Coleridge are far too severe in their judgment of men who were perfectly sincere according to their light, but Job is guided by a true instinct when he regards them, as far as he is concerned, as blind leaders of the blind. He is right in rejecting their aid, and, though all God's ways are dark to him, in staking everything on God's truth. This is his guiding star.

¹ xiii. 7.² xiii. 4.³ *Aids to Reflection*, XLIII., C.

Stars are of mighty use. The night
 Is dark and long ;
 The Rode foul ; and when one goes right
 Six may go wrong.
 One twinkling ray,
 Shot o'er some cloud,
 May clear much way
 And guide a crowd.¹

III.

We see Job, now, at one of the great moments of his life. Not fearing his fate, but believing in the justice of his cause, he is prepared to put everything "to the touch" by an act of faith which may win or lose everything. This man, who has always doubted his courage, is about to reveal his spirit by a sublime affirmation of the right of conscience before a Heaven that seems dumb to his appeal. Trembling, as it were, on the threshold of the supreme court, fully alive to the fearful risk he is running, he is sustained by the sense of his own integrity and a secret assurance in the justice of things, even though the verdict should go against him. His words vibrate with passion :

Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak,
 And let come on me what will.
 Wherefore should I take my flesh in my teeth,
 And put my life in mine hand ?
 Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him :
 Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him.²

What did Job mean ? In this translation of his words we miss the music of a familiar text—we miss the word "trust" ; but the harmony is still there. If our fathers did not catch exactly what he said, if they read more meaning into his words than they contain, they were not mistaken in think-

¹ Vaughan, *Stars*.² xiii. 13-15.

ing this one of the greatest utterances of faith which have come straight from the heart of man. It is an act of trust, all the greater because Job cannot trust God at this stage of his experience in the way he used to do. An Isaac, stretched on the sacrificial altar, a dutiful Jephthah's daughter, might have expressed a simple faith in Fatherhood, but Job had no such confidence. His faith in the supremacy of the moral law is all the more wonderful because he has lost fellowship with the Lawgiver. "Though I cannot hold out any longer, though I know He will slay me, nevertheless I will maintain the innocence of my cause before Him." With no idea how it is to be done, with no conviction as yet of a Vindicator, with no prospects beyond the grave, he will make the venture at all hazards, and his spirit gives him a presentiment of victory.

We may compare the spirit of Job with the attitude of two other people in ancient and modern times. The young Queen Esther is required to make a great decision at a crisis in her people's history. Mordecai's appeal to her to interview the Persian King without the invitation of the royal sceptre is a call to run all risks for the sake of God and country. There is nothing in the character of the king to encourage her confidence in his mercy, nothing but the justice of her claim to embolden her to defy the laws of the Medes and Persians, and take her life in her hands; but she makes the venture. Heroic annals record few braver words than those that were uttered by this royal maiden in the scorn of consequences: "I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."¹ This analogy may not take us far, but

¹ Esth. iv. 16.

it illustrates something of the desperate courage which prompted Job at this moment to appeal to an unknown God. Yet there was more in it than courage, for we cannot fail to notice a note of triumph blending with his despair, which reveals a fine religious spirit. There have been men who have failed to find any firm basis for religious conviction, who have made their mark as seekers for truth, and Arthur Hugh Clough may be cited as, in some respects, a modern representative of Job. Educated in the best schools, with a deep religious nature, the theology of his time failed to appeal to a mind which could not accept dogma without enquiry. Between the orthodox faith and scepticism of his age he moved about in a spiritual world he could not realise, a prey to all the blank misgivings which can beset the soul. Yet, with this lack of assurance, he craved for certainty, never wearied in the pursuit of truth, was never daunted by the struggle; and though compelled to suspend his judgment to the last, left his splendid witness to the eternal light which shines behind every cloud.

• It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, truth is so.¹

It was in this spirit that Job uttered his memorable words. Courage, intellectual honesty, with a passionate love for reality, made him the man he was—with no light on his way but the light in his soul that truth is even better than life. This was the faith in the honest doubt of Job, which was worth more than the blind adherence of his friends to their creed. For such a man there is no turning back whatever may happen; “let come on him

¹ *With Him there is no Variableness.*

what will," he will go on, simply upheld by the conviction that, for him, there is no other way. He shudders as he makes his great resolve, for he feels sure of provoking the Divine judgment. Be it so; he does not fear. Though the heavens are as brass, though He slay me, yet do I maintain the right of conscience—the right to appeal from Heaven's silence to Heaven's justice! This was the greatest triumph of Job's faith; not the peace which came to him afterwards through the vision of God, but the calm assurance that inspired him now that, whether we hear God speaking or not, we must be true to the law within.

IV.

Those who cannot credit Job with such a sublime achievement point out that this lofty note is not sustained. It is a desperate venture, it is true, and Job distrusts himself with the old haunting fear that his spirit will not be equal to his trial. With a real human touch, he begs for two favours: Will God remove His afflicting hand and not overwhelm him?

Then call thou, and I will answer;
Or let me speak, and answer thou me.¹

Does Job actually expect, in spite of his despairing language, to have verbal intercourse with God? We do not know, but, as though he still indulged the hope, he seems to sum up the chief points he would plead before Him in the rôle of plaintiff or defendant.² He is like a prisoner who has been kept in ignorance of the accusations he has to meet. "How many are mine iniquities and sins?" Job

¹ xiii. 20-22.

² xiii. 23 to end of chapter xiv. represents something of the spirit of this thought-out speech.

does not pose as sinless. The sins of his youth rise up against him (perhaps the sins he had feared in his own children); but is it just to visit the faults of youth on the man who has renounced them—to rake up a past which has been redeemed in order to frame an indictment against him?¹ For he speaks not only as an individual, but as a representative of his race.² How frail and brief life is! Like an autumn leaf, a withered flower, it comes and goes with nothing to show that it has ever been. Oh, that it were otherwise! Oh, that the impossible might happen—a clean thing come out of an unclean, or life be possessed with something of the indomitable vitality of a tree which may be cut down and yet burst out with new shoots and foliage!³ But, no; it cannot be. Man dies, and his old haunts know him no more. Job pursues the destiny of man down to its lowest existence in Sheol—not worth calling life—and then, again, with that revulsion of feeling created by the instinctive demands of the spirit, he cannot accept his own conclusions. Is there no loophole of escape from this dreary prospect? Is it not possible that Sheol might only be a prison-house till a day of release came, when a man might really live again?⁴ It is a wild, vague, unsubstantial hope, but the mind of Job feeds on it. He would be content if his judge were his gaoler, if there were any hope that those prison doors might one day be opened by Him:

Would that thou hid me in the grave
And kept me with death's gaoler care;

¹ xiii. 26.

² xiv. 1.

³ xiv. 7. In the country east of the Jordan many kinds of trees (vine, fig, walnut, citron, ash, mulberry) are still renewed by the process described in chapter xiv. (see Delitzsch, *Job*, i. 245).

⁴ xiv. 14.

Until thy wrath away should wear ;
A sentence fixed, thy prisoner gave,
I would endure with patience brave,
So thou remembered I was there.¹

Job is willing to wait if he can wait in hope, but how precarious his hope is ! All the arguments he has turned over in his mind give him so little security, for he is still in the traditional rut which makes him feel that his affliction can only be accounted for on the lines of punishment. Darkness falls over him again. He cannot endure the strain of waiting, hoping, and again despairing. Mountains are worn down by incessant friction ; how much more the life of man subject to incessant unseen influences ! Yet a thought has crossed his mind which will come again—not as an alluring day-dream, but as a larger hope of the ultimate vindication of his character and restored fellowship with God.

Thus ends the first stage of this story. There is the tension of growing estrangement between Job and his friends, accentuated by the conviction Job has that he is struggling against a dark destiny. But this destiny is not simply the shadow of fate, for, though Job has lost touch with God, he has not lost the sense of His reality. Maeterlinck still contends² that the virtue of man—doing good for the sake of good, without thought of reward—will not crumble though God Himself seem to be unjust. If Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear are crushed under a fatality they cannot resist, there is an inner force in suffering man which can produce the moral triumph of a Pascal, a Fénelon, a Joan of Arc. But,

¹ George Macdonald, *A Song-Sermon*.

² *Wisdom and Destiny*, May, 1918.

we ask, what fed and sustained this inner force? Was it not the sense that, in spite of all adversity, human life is ruled by Divine wisdom? Job can rise above the thought of reward and punishment to belief in virtue as its own reward, but he still looks for the sanction to that faith in the character of God. He cannot think of destiny apart from Divine wisdom and justice. It is true that he has come to count God as his enemy; but he has already chosen rather to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of his fellow-men, and it is this conviction of a higher court of appeal which sustains his spirit. Now he can sing:

No coward's soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere.

He will yet complete the song:

I see heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.¹

¹ Emily Brontë. (Maeterlinck mentions her as another instance of moral triumph over adverse circumstances.)

CHAPTER VIII

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

I call to remembrance my song in the night.

Ps. lxxvii.

CHAPTER XV.

1. Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,
2. Should a wise man make answer with vain knowledge,
And fill his belly with the east wind?
3. Should he reason with unprofitable talk,
Or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?
4. Yea, thou doest away with fear,
And restrainest devotion before God.
5. For thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth,
And thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.
6. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I:
Yea, thine own lips testify against thee.
7. Art thou the first man that was born?
Or wast thou brought forth before the hills?
8. Hast thou heard the secret counsel of God?
And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?
9. What knowest thou, that we know not?
What understandest thou, which is not in us?
10. With us are both the grayheaded and the very aged men,
Much elder than thy father.
11. Are the consolations of God too small for thee?
And the word *that dealeth* gently with thee?
12. Why doth thine heart carry thee away?
And why do thine eyes wink?
13. That thou turnest thy spirit against God,
And lettest *such* words go out of thy mouth.
14. What is man, that he should be clean?
And he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?
15. Behold, he putteth no trust in his holy ones;
Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.
16. How much less one that is abominable and corrupt,
A man that drinketh iniquity like water!
17. I will shew thee, hear thou me;
And that which I have seen I will declare:
18. (Which wise men have told
From their fathers, and have not hid it;
Unto whom alone the land was given,
And no stranger passed among them:)

20. The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days,
Even the number of years that are laid up for the oppressor.
21. A sound of terrors is in his ears ;
In prosperity the spoiler shall come upon him :
22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness,
And he is waited for of the sword :
23. He wandereth abroad for bread, *saying*, Where is it ?
He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.
24. Distress and anguish make him afraid ;
They prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle :
25. Because he hath stretched out his hand against God,
And behaveth himself proudly against the Almighty ;
26. He runneth upon him with a *stiff* neck,
With the thick bosses of his bucklers :
27. Because he hath covered his face with his fatness,
And made collops of fat on his flanks ;
28. And he hath dwelt in desolate cities,
In houses which no man inhabited,
Which were ready to become heaps.
29. He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue,
Neither shall their produce bend to the earth.
30. He shall not depart out of darkness ;
The flame shall dry up his branches,
And by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.
31. Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself :
For vanity shall be his recompence.
32. It shall be accomplished before his time,
And his branch shall not be green.
33. He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine,
And shall cast off his flower as the olive.
34. For the company of the godless shall be barren,
And fire shall consume the tents of bribery.
35. They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity,
And their belly prepareth deceit.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. I have heard many such things :
Miserable comforters are ye all.
3. Shall vain words have an end ?
Or what provoketh thee that thou answerest ?
4. I also could speak as ye do ;
If your soul were in my soul's stead,
I could join words together against you,
And shake mine head at you.
5. *But* I would strengthen you with my mouth,
And the solace of my lips should assuage *your grief*.
6. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged :
And though I forbear, what am I eased ?

7. But now he hath made me weary :
Thou hast made desolate all my company.
8. And thou hast laid fast hold on me, *which* is a witness *against* me.
And my leanness riseth up against me ; it testifieth to my face.
9. He hath torn me in his wrath, and persecuted me ;
He hath gnashed upon me with his teeth :
Mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon me.
10. They have gaped upon me with their mouth ;
They have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully :
They gather themselves together against me.
11. God delivereth me to the ungodly,
And casteth me into the hands of the wicked.
12. I was at ease, and he brake me asunder ;
Yea, he hath taken me by the neck and dashed me to pieces :
He hath also set me up for his mark,
13. His archers compass me round about,
He cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare ;
He poureth out my gall upon the ground.
14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach ;
He runneth upon me like a giant.
15. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
And have laid my horn in the dust.
16. My face is foul with weeping,
And on my eyelids is the shadow of death ;
17. Although there is no violence in mine hands,
And my prayer is pure.
18. O earth, cover not thou my blood,
And let my cry have no *resting* place.
19. Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
And he that voucheth for me is on high.
20. My friends scorn me :
But mine eye poureth out tears unto God ;
21. That he would maintain the right of a man with God,
And of a son of man with his neighbour !
22. For when a few years are come,
I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

CHAPTER XVII.

1. My spirit is consumed, my days are extinct,
The grave is *ready* for me.
2. Surely there are mockers with me,
And mine eye abideth in their provocation.
3. Give now a pledge, be surety for me with thyself ;
Who is there that will strike hands with me ?
4. For thou hast hid their heart from understanding :
Therefore shalt thou not exalt *them*.
5. He that denounceth his friends for a prey,
Even the eyes of his children shall fail.
6. He hath made me also a byword of the people ;
And I am become an open abhorring.

7. Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow,
And all my members are as a shadow.
8. Upright men shall be astonied at this,
And the innocent shall stir up himself against the godless.
9. Yet shall the righteous hold on his way,
And he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.
10. But return ye, all of you, and come now :
And I shall not find a wise man among you.
11. My days are past, my purposes are broken off,
Even the thoughts of my heart.
12. They change the night into day :
The light, *say they*, is near unto the darkness.
13. If I look for Sheol as mine house ;
If I have spread my couch in the darkness ;
14. If I have said to corruption, Thou art my father,
To the worm, *Thou art* my mother and my sister ;
15. Where then is my hope ?
And as for my hope, who shall see it ?
16. It shall go down to the bars of Sheol,
When once there is rest in the dust.

To a casual reader the story of Job may seem a dreary repetition of the same ideas, but those who look deeper may discover a progressive movement. As the contest between Job and his friends proceeds it will be noticeable that the relative position of the speakers has altered : hitherto Job has been carried away by passionate feeling, whilst his friends have been comparatively temperate ; but this attitude becomes more and more reversed as the friends become convinced of Job's guilt, and the accused gains more confidence in his innocence. As the general statements of his critics become more direct and personal, descending to actual misrepresentation of the truth, the sufferer's vision will become clearer, rising to the faith that God Himself will vindicate his character.

I.

The aim of Job's friends has been to bring him back to reverent thoughts of God, and to this end they have spoken severally of the purity, the moral

discrimination, the omniscience of the Creator. Job has shown that in this head-knowledge he is in no way behind his teachers, and that his supreme desire is to stand before the Divine tribunal. Whilst the friends are shocked by his daring language, it is obvious that he has struck from their hands the weapon they have used against him, and must first be convinced of his guilt before he will be disposed to take the sinner's place. It is in this way that their thoughts are diverted from heaven to earth, from God to man—especially the wicked man in history. By drawing dark pictures of the fate of the wicked they hope to awaken a dormant conscience in Job without needing to avail themselves of the last resource—stating the specific sins he must have committed. When Eliphaz begins his second speech, he is somewhat different from the calm, prophetic person to whom we were first introduced. He is a man palpably hurt in his feelings who cannot refrain from expressing them in language more forcible than polite. There is a Divine irony which is unanswerable, but there is a human irony which is nothing but an outlet for ruffled pride, and Eliphaz gives an exhibition of that.

“Art thou the first man that was born?” Since age brings wisdom, Job must be very old, seeing he is so wise! But mere age would not make him as wise as he is; he must be the primeval man who sat in the heavenly council and heard all the Divine plans before the creation of the world!¹ But let Job come down to the real facts of the case: what knowest thou that we know not? What indeed,

¹ xv. 7, 8. This mythical person is not mentioned anywhere else in the Old Testament, but there is some analogy in Prov. viii. 22-31, where wisdom is personified, associated with God in creation as a master workman.

we echo—what but crushing disaster, physical pain, disillusionment, the horror of spiritual darkness, loss of all human comfort, a sense of alienation from God? Eliphaz had never been to this school!

His placid philosophy had never faced the problem created by the sense of loneliness, the pressure of doubt and despair. He has certainly given Job of his best—soothing doctrines which he believes to be divinely inspired—and he cannot understand why they have not been acceptable. “Are the consolations of God too small for thee?”¹ he exclaims, with a naïve unconsciousness that there is all the difference between Divine consolation and misapplied wisdom wrapped up in platitudes. Meanwhile Eliphaz reveals the limit of his experience by repeating the terms of the oracle which he has already described in his midnight vision. It was very impressive then, and no less true now; but Job is in no mood to hear an old sermon on the text, “What is man that he should be clean?” Can Eliphaz throw light on the mystery of suffering? No; for he proves to be as strict a believer as Bildad in the finality of the traditional teaching. Antiquity is the only test of truth. There is a wisdom free from all novelties and impurities which belonged to a people settled in their convictions before they were disturbed by the inrush of new ideas.² When was this happy time? We do not know, but Job is quite prepared to listen to this wisdom if it will provide the key to his problem. No one should be more competent to do this than Eliphaz; but as he proceeds we are more impressed by his gifts as a special pleader than his devotion to truth, for in a vivid picture of the doom of the wicked there is a lavish colouring which betrays the bias of the artist.

¹ xv. 11.

² xv. 18, 19.

The wicked are never happy in their lawless adventure, for they have always a sense of being pursued by the feet of judgment.

At every step they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy.¹

In the hour of plenty, with more than heart can wish, they have visions of famine. They sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind.² There is wisdom in all that Eliphaz says; yet, as we listen, we know that he is showing us a picture of the wicked, drawn not on the scale of exact truth, but of theological consistency. The wages of sin are not always paid in full in this world, and to overstate a doctrine is one way in which to discredit it. But it is clear that in the new tone Eliphaz adopts towards his friend he is making general statements with an eye to Job's special benefit. He is convinced now that nothing but strong measures will bring him into his right mind, and though he does not apply them in a direct, personal way to Job, he is quite ready to do so if a palpable warning is disregarded.

II.

Job is weary of truths which have become mere truisms on the lips of his friends.

I have heard many such things :
Miserable comforters are ye all.

I also could speak as ye do
If your soul were in my soul's stead.³

Their consolations are "Words, words, words . . . they imitated humanity so abominably."⁴ But his quarrel is not with them. He is fighting unseen forces with which he cannot grapple, though he

¹ xv. 21 (Gray).

² xv. 20-35.

³ xvi. 2-4. Cheyne calls them "tormenting comforters."

⁴ *Hamlet*.

feels their grip upon him, and is wounded in body and soul. This hostile power is sometimes nameless—"he," "they," "mine enemy"—but it all seems to mean that God is against him, making him a target for the arrows of affliction. Whenever the full force of the estrangement between God and himself comes home to him, we see Job at the lowest pitch of despair, and nothing is so real to him now. He feels that the darkness of his present experience can only be accounted for by some hideous moral confusion. It has come upon him, "although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure."¹ To whom, to what, shall he appeal? O earth, cover not thou my blood! Death is certain, but let the earth refuse to bury him, refuse to keep his secret.

Till blood for blood atones!
 Ay, tho' he's buried in a cave,
 And trodden down with stones,
 And years have rotted off his flesh—
 The world shall see his bones!²

Job expresses the primitive conviction that the very dust out of which man came shall bear witness to the sacredness of life, that every drop of blood unjustly spilt cries from the ground.

And then we see a surprising transition from earth to heaven, for in the next breath he turns for vindication to the very quarter whence the supposed injustice has come: "Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he that voucheth for me is on high."³

How can we account for these sudden flashes of inspiration? It is not enough to say that Job is a man of moods, alternating between despair and hope—there is some secret strength sustaining this man. Nothing disturbed the religious serenity of

¹ xvi. 17.

² *The Dream of Eugene Aram* (Hood). See Isa. xxvi. 21, Gen. iv. 10, for the same idea.

³ xvi. 19.

his friends ; but it is noticeable that gleams of intuition which come to the sufferer do not come to them. "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord,"¹ and He who does not quench the flickering wick preserved the flame which threatened to expire in the spirit of Job. His story will never be understood if we only think of the presence of God at the beginning and end of it ; for He who believed in the integrity of His servant has never forsaken him, never left him to breast the blows of circumstance alone, and will uphold him to the end. No voice has answered Job's appeal, no revelation given certainty to his hope ; but the spirit of God has never ceased to strengthen his spirit, opening out ways of escape from an intolerable burden.

"He giveth songs in the night,"² and some of this music we have already heard. It floated as a sweet song of resignation : "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord." We heard the plaintive note of human entreaty crying out for the human touch in God, and then a clarion voice pealing out the conviction that truth needs no aid from falsehood to maintain its rights, followed by what seemed to be the swan song of one who thought his end was near : "Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him." Yet again his spirit soared like a skylark towards the heavens : "If a man die, shall he live again ?" And now in a moment of deep depression we are to hear other music, some of the sweetest songs that ever came from saddest thought.

III.

How fine is the appeal from earth to heaven !
When Job dies and his blood cries from the ground

¹ Prov. xx. 27.

² xxxv. 10. Cf. Ps. lxxvii. 6.

it will not cry in vain, for his witness and voucher is in heaven. "My friends scorn me," but there is one who will maintain the right of a man with God.¹ Who is this? None other than God Himself. But if God be against him, the author of all his trouble, how can He be for him? Again we see that dualism in Job's thought which creates the difference between God who oppresses him and God who represents his cause. It involves him in a paradox; the antagonist, against whom Job prays God to right him, is the one to whom he appeals; the defendant implores the plaintiff to be his judge! He has longed for some "daysman"² to come between them, and now he utters the daring thought: Let God Himself be his daysman! The logical confusion in Job's reasoning does not conceal the real advance he is making towards the discovery that all contradictions may yet be dissolved by some unity of purpose in God Himself. If no one can be thought of as God's equal, no one who can force Him to do justice, no one but God Himself, then who else can be his vindicator? It is only a hazardous guess, not yet an affirmation of faith; but Job is buoyed up by it, and it makes a real turning-point in his story. He has but a germ of faith as yet in the Divine impartiality, and the best he can now ask is some pledge that God will see him through the clearing of his character.

Give now a pledge, be surety for me with thyself;
Who is there that will strike hands with me?³

What boldness! Job expects to die under God's frown, but before he dies he longs to secure his

¹ xvi. 19, 21. See Peake's illuminating exposition of this passage.

² ix. 33.

³ xvii. 3. The expression "strike hands" refers to the gesture with which a surety was undertaken (Prov. vi. 1).

future vindication, and therefore implores God to deposit now the pledge that will guarantee it; for who can give such a pledge to God but God Himself? Job feels driven to this conclusion, and the failure of his logic does not affect the reality of his religious experience. He is appealing from the God of wrath to the God of grace, which is really an appeal from the phantom God of his imagination to the "God of things as they are." He is learning one of the most precious lessons of experience, that if we doubt God we can only solve our doubts through Him. "There is no refuge from God but unto him."¹ This song in the night will seem to die away, but we shall hear it again, for all Job has willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist :

Not its semblance but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.²

IV.

Gloom overclouds the heart of Job again as he realises his actual condition. His friends, without understanding, have utterly failed him, and he is an object of public contempt. The whole world is against him, and the once honoured name of Job has become a byword of the people.³ Almost blinded by reason of sorrow, reduced to a shadow of his former self, he is brought to the lowest ebb of weakness and humiliation. Will his spirit survive? Yes, by virtue of its resolution to hold on the way of righteousness though man fails and the heavens fall.

¹ Koran, sura ix. 119.

² *Abt Vogler*, Robert Browning.

³ xvii. 6.

I am become an open abhorring,

Yet shall the righteous hold on his way,
And he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.¹

This conviction that virtue is its own reward is perhaps the most surprising and lofty note we have yet heard,² and there are those who cannot believe that Job ever expressed it. It might have been uttered by Bildad as a religious platitude, it is said,³ but the thought is too noble for Job. Yet, was not this the secret of his endurance in the hour of trial? We recollect the Satan's insinuation, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" challenging virtue ever to be sufficient unto herself. We know the evidence he might have accumulated in scouring the earth: the bargaining spirit in religion, piety which was merely refined selfishness, the tacit conclusion that religious profession is the sure road to worldly prosperity. But the world is to learn that there is a faith which rises above all that is prudential and calculating by the sheer love of truth; they are to see a man holding on his way by his grip of reality, getting stronger and stronger because his heart is pure from all self-seeking aims. "I have tried," wrote Sir Thomas Browne,⁴ "if I could reach that great resolution to be honest without a thought of heaven or hell, and indeed I found upon a natural inclination and inbred loyalty unto virtue that I could serve her without a livery." We may credit Job with the same loyalty and the same resolution. Solitary, deserted by friends, smitten of God and afflicted, he has grasped the truth which survives when even the foundations of religion seem to have been destroyed, that the grand

¹ xvii. 6, 9. Delitzsch calls this "a rocket which shoots above the darkness."

² Davidson.

³ Peake.

⁴ *Religio Medici*.

simple landmarks of morality remain. "In the darkest hour through which a human soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain. If there be no God and no future state, yet even then it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be true than false, . . . better to be brave than a coward. Thrice blessed is he who, when all is dreary and cheerless within and without, . . . has obstinately clung to moral good. Thrice blessed, for his night shall pass into clear bright day."¹ Job does not think that morality is independent of any Divine sanction, but he does not suspend his morality until he can recover the creed he has lost. This is the patience of Job—no mere submission to the inevitable, no crouching before the unknown, no resort to any spiritual sedative, but the unconquerable hold of his spirit on the essential truth that, behind all anomalies, righteousness is its own reward. No mysteries, no wrongs, no wounds in the house of his friends, shall make him falter in following this gleam, and it is the answer to all mistranslations of his life, all suggestion that he had lost the true religious spirit. This momentary glimpse into the depths of a great soul is soon eclipsed. Darkness again descends upon him. Job is under no delusion about himself, does not build upon any way of escape from his appointed destiny; his free spirit, untrammelled by the fetters of tradition, sees itself imprisoned behind the bars of Sheol, a victim of futile days and broken purposes; yet all unknown to him his prophecy is to be literally fulfilled, and he who holds on his way, true to the law within, shall wax stronger and stronger.

¹ F.W. Robertson, *Life and Letters* (Stopford Brooke), chapter iii.

CHAPTER IX

JOB'S VINDICATOR

I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first
I ask not: but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive!

ROBERT BROWNING: *Paracelsus*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
2. How long will ye lay snares for words?
Consider, and afterwards we will speak.
3. Wherefore are we accounted as beasts,
And are become unclean in your sight?
4. Thou that tearest thyself in thine anger,
Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?
Or shall the rock be removed out of its place?
5. Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,
And the spark of his fire shall not shine.
6. The light shall be dark in his tent,
And his lamp above him shall be put out.
7. The steps of his strength shall be straitened,
And his own counsel shall cast him down.
8. For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
And he walketh upon the toils.
9. A gin shall take *him* by the heel,
And a snare shall lay hold on him.
10. A noose is hid for him in the ground,
And a trap for him in the way.
11. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side,
And shall chase him at his heels.
12. His strength shall be hunger-bitten,
And calamity shall be ready for his halting.
13. It shall devour the members of his body,
Yea, the firstborn of death shall devour his members.
14. He shall be rooted out of his tent wherein he trusteth;
And he shall be brought to the king of terrors.
15. There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his:
Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.
16. His roots shall be dried up beneath,
And above shall his branch be cut off.

17. His remembrance shall perish from the earth,
And he shall have no name in the street.
18. He shall be driven from light into darkness,
And chased out of the world.
19. He shall have neither son nor son's son among his people,
Nor any remaining where he sojourned.
20. They that come after shall be astonished at his day,
As they that went before were affrighted.
21. Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous,
And this is the place of him that knoweth not God.

CHAPTER XIX.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. How long will ye vex my soul,
And break me in pieces with words?
3. These ten times have ye reproached me :
Ye are not ashamed that ye deal hardly with me.
4. And be it indeed that I have erred,
Mine error remaineth with myself.
5. If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me,
And plead against me my reproach :
6. Know now that God hath subverted me *in my cause*,
And hath compassed me with his net.
7. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard :
I cry for help, but there is no judgement.
8. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass,
And hath set darkness in my paths.
9. He hath stripped me of my glory,
And taken the crown from my head.
10. He hath broken me down on every side, and I am gone :
And mine hope hath he plucked up like a tree.
11. He hath also kindled his wrath against me,
And he counteth me unto him as *one of his adversaries*.
12. His troops come on together, and cast up their way against me,
And encamp round about my tent.
13. He hath put my brethren far from me,
And mine acquaintance are wholly estranged from me.
14. My kinsfolk have failed,
And my familiar friends have forgotten me.
15. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a
stranger :
I am an alien in their sight.
16. I call unto my servant, and he giveth me no answer,
Though I intreat him with my mouth.
17. My breath is strange to my wife,
And my supplication to the children of my *mother's* womb.
18. Even young children despise me ;
If I arise, they speak against me.

19. All my inward friends abhor me :
And they whom I loved are turned against me.
20. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh,
And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.
21. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends ;
For the hand of God hath touched me.
22. Why do ye persecute me as God,
And are not satisfied with my flesh ?
23. Oh that my words were now written !
Oh that they were inscribed in a book !
24. That with an iron pen and lead
They were graven in the rock for ever !
25. But I know that my redeemer liveth,
And that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth :
26. And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God :
27. Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.
My reins are consumed within me.
28. If ye say, How we will persecute him !
Seeing that the root of the matter is found in me ;
29. Be ye afraid of the sword :
For wrath *bringeth* the punishments of the sword,
That ye may know there is a judgement.

WE hear no response to Job's lofty thoughts in the speech of Bildad the Shuhite, which remains on the same dead level of platitude, heated by a sense of personal grievance. Not only are Job's arguments far-fetched,¹ but his moral claims reflect upon the character of his friends, who, if they are wrong, evidently belong to the class of people he has described as without understanding.² Job is too self-centred.

Shall the earth be forsaken for thee ?
Or shall the rock be removed out of its place ?

In these rhetorical questions Bildad asks Job what he expects God to do for him. Is the world to be turned upside down for him ? Is the established order of the moral universe to be disturbed in order to vindicate his character ?

¹ xviii. 2 : " How long will ye lay snares for words [lit., hunt for words] ? "

² See xvii. 4.

No doubt Bildad has hit upon the tendency of every sufferer to regard himself as a centre of interest to which everything should converge, but this moralist does not dream of larger issues at stake. It is too much to expect a miracle to rectify our personal troubles ; but suppose Job is involved in some problem which concerns the moral government of the world—suppose he is not expressing a personal complaint, but speaking as a representative man—then his cry, rising from the heart of humanity, must gain some answer from heaven, even though it may mean the giving of a new revelation to the world. Bildad is blind to all this. Keeping his eye upon Job in a speech studded with pithy proverbial sayings, he solemnly relates the history of the wicked man's downfall through all its stages to the final extinction of his name and race.¹ First, the sinner's lamp, the symbol of happiness and prosperity, goes out. His confident, swinging stride becomes a slow, timid groping of his way in a world full of traps to catch the feet that stray from the right path. Pursued by fears within and without, with strength sapped by disease, no longer master of himself or his possessions, he shall be brought to the king of terrors ;² and the wretch, with no successor to perpetuate his name, shall go down

To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

Under this dark picture Bildad wrote the words : "This is the place of him that knoweth not God." The barbed allusion to his sad history, the eclipse of fortune, the physical pain, the solitariness, the

¹ xviii. 5 to end.

² xviii. 14—*i.e.*, death.

aversion of his fellow-men—each damning sentence would carry to Job the unspoken charge: Thou art the man!

I.

We are now approaching the moment when Job made another grand venture of faith, but it is necessary to get his point of view before we can appreciate his effort. No one would anticipate any great advance from his first despairing words, but we have noticed before that when he seems to be at the lowest pitch he is capable of rising to great attainments. In the pursuit of truth he has long outstripped his friends, and his spiritual experience, so far, has pointed to great things. Now he is to receive his crowning reward in a conviction of certainty which only comes to those who are prepared to follow truth

Like a sinking star
Beyond the furthest bounds of human thought.

It is necessary to follow closely all the changing moods of Job at this stage. He expostulates with his friends for their hard criticism of his case:

How long will ye vex my soul,
And break me in pieces with words?¹

But the matter is not between him and them. They are outside his experience. Even if I have erred, he goes on to say, it is not anything you can enter into, for it hurts no one but myself.² In these words Job seems to definitely break with his friends, who, with the best intentions, have only increased his perplexities. Deeply he feels the loss of all human companionship, the severance of domestic and social ties; but still his keenest pangs come

¹ xix. 2.

² xix. 4.

from the sense of alienation from God. Job never doubts that this is his greatest loss :

He hath broken me down on every side, . . .
And mine hope hath he plucked up like a tree.¹

In losing God he has lost everything, and only escaped utter destruction "with the skin of his teeth."² Overcome by the sense of his bereavement, the cry bursts from him: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!"³ But he reads no pity in their eyes. They are good men—no doubt better than their creed—but, bound by an iron theory of life, what can they do? The reason Job urges for their pity is the very reason why they cannot respond, for, if God has smitten him, it must be because he is the object of Divine judgment. This is the last appeal he will make to the heart of his friends, but his very next word is an appeal to their conscience: "Why do ye persecute me as God?"⁴ They were led astray, not through lack of pity, but through following the dictates of an unenlightened conscience. Shut up to a narrow view of life, embodying the fatal result of a finished religious education, the day came when they thought they were doing God service by an unrelenting attitude towards the sufferer; and Job had to learn, finally and for ever, that the school to which his friends belonged could do nothing for him before he really knew that man's extremity is God's opportunity.

Bildad had threatened Job that his name would be forgotten by posterity, and now Job appeals to posterity :

¹ xix. 10.

² xix. 20. A proverbial expression of bare survival.

³ xix. 21.

⁴ xix. 22.

Oh that my words were now written !
Oh that they were inscribed in a book !
That with an iron pen and lead¹
They were graven in the rock for ever !

Job cannot believe that his experience is to be lost, that the world is to be no wiser for all that he has suffered and dreamed and hoped. He has no idea of immortalising himself (any more than the anonymous writer who embodied his request in the book which bears his name), but he believes that there is a value in his experience which, if recorded, would permanently enrich the world. It is an appeal from the unbelief of his contemporaries to the verdict of history—perhaps an expression of faith that future ages would be fairer to him, with something of the poet's faith that "the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns."² It has been thought³ that Job desires to inscribe in a book or on a rock the famous words which follow—immortal words of faith which have passed from mouth to mouth ever since they were recorded. The idea is attractive, but it is clear that he passes from the idea of an inscription to a far grander record of his faith, written, not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart. For, not in a book or a rock, but in the heart of man himself shall be found written that witness to God which remains though parchments perish, rocks crumble—though the great globe itself shall dissolve and leave not a rack behind !

Friends fail me, the future is dark,

¹ xix. 23. The lead was run into the letters cut out in the rock to make them indelible (Driver).

² Tennyson.

³ Cox.

But I know that my redeemer liveth,
And that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth :
And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God :
Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.¹

II.

We generally approach these words through Christian experience, but we ought to approach them through the experience of Job. He could remember a time when God had been a reality to him without a cloud in the sky, and then a storm had burst upon him, inflicting losses of home, children, and peace of mind. Seeing no light upon his way, lonely, misunderstood, he had longed for the quiet of the grave, to be stretched no longer "upon the rack of this tough world." Prostrate before God and man, he saw nothing in human life worthy of the Divine notice, and a horror of darkness fell upon him when he came to believe that God was actually against him, besetting him on every side with adverse circumstances. A deep sense of injustice rankled in his soul, fostered by the conviction of his innocence and the right to plead his cause before an impartial judgment-seat. Gleams of hope flashed upon him from time to time : God might change His hostile attitude, or, if a man died, he might live again to have his character vindicated. He longed to find that human touch in the Divine nature which could fathom the bitter experience through which he was passing, provide some point of contact where God and man could meet on common ground ; but while he hoped for this relief his character was scrutinised by a human tribunal which did not

¹ See Appendix, Note D : "On the Idea of an After-Life."

hesitate to judge and condemn him. Every venture of faith, every guess at truth, was answered by human voices claiming to be the final court of appeal. Driven to distraction, Job seemed a man from whom nothing but a monotone of despair might be expected, yet all the time he was qualifying to receive the reward of a stubborn fidelity to truth, a brave refusal to accept any sedative to thought and conscience. Rising above the grievances of a solitary sufferer, keeping his mind open to new impressions, he saw himself the representative and spokesman of a world involved in the mystery of suffering, and a light surprised him which promised not to solve that mystery, but vindicate faith in a moral government of the world. There are moments when we surmount fear, doubts vanish, and we are suddenly sure of God. One of these moments had come to Job, and it came because they had come before, found him responsive to their inspiration, ready to obey any noble impulse rather than trifle with the realities of life.

This loyalty to truth gave sudden certainty to Job, that, in spite of a hidden God, He lived to vindicate all who trusted in Him. Far above all moral confusion, all human fallible judgment, there was a justice which would redeem him from the stain upon his honour created by an anomalous position and the censure of the world. Above the world of death, there was One who not only existed, but lived to share the life of His people, would yet stand upon Job's grave and close all debate by a final pronouncement of His servant's integrity. More than that—the pure in heart shall see God, not in this world, but in an after-life, not through the eyes of another, but with his own. It mattered

not how short or long the glimpse would be, it would be enough to say, "I have seen God!" All Job's misery had come from the hiding of God's face; all his joy would be in gazing upon Him.

For, sudden, the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the element's rage, the fiend voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light . . .
 And with God be the rest.¹

III.

It is easy to read more meaning into this great declaration than it will bear, but we must not miss its true value. Job was not the first to speak of a "redeemer"² who would redress injustice. In human life, he was the nearest blood relation on whom civil law imposed the duty of redeeming the property or person of his kinsman, and criminal law the duty of avenging his kinsman's blood. This office was boldly applied by an unknown prophet to God Himself as the deliverer of Israel from exile.³ Job deliberately chooses the word that gathers into itself all that he has longed for: one who will befriend him, stand by his side in the hour of need, and redeem him from unmerited reproach. He has not yet overcome the distinction, in his own mind, between God who persecuted him and God to whom he can appeal—cannot reconcile a strange Providence with a moral ideal which he finds in his own heart; his mind still swings to and fro between these discordant ideas, but all the faith he has

¹ *Prospice* (Browning).

² Heb. "Gōēl" = vindicator or avenger. See Num. xxxv. 19; Ruth ii. 20.

³ Isa. xlix. 7-8.

already expressed in a moral order reaches its climax in the confident appeal from God his persecutor to God his vindicator. Whilst Job barely exists, He lives—his witness in heaven—He who will one day break the silence and vouch for the innocence of His servant! How much more will He do for him? It is too much to say that he confers the gift of immortality, for the glimpse Job catches of an after-life is fugitive—one of those rare moments which come (the poet tells us¹) to those who, “in a season of clear weather,” catch the sound of breakers on an immortal shore. Yet there would be a blessed moment of consciousness when, roused from the apathy of Sheol, Job would see God for himself and know that his character was cleared. How could he know that, unless the heart’s deepest longing was satisfied by the summoning of the dead back to life to be present at his own vindication, to see God not as a stranger² but a friend?

“I now think,” says Coleridge,³ “after many doubts, that this passage may fairly be taken as a burst of determination, a *quasi* prophecy. “I know not *how* this can be; but in spite of all my difficulties, this I *do* know, that I shall be recompensed.” Job never dreamt of recompense in the present life, but he had seen a glimmer of light through the bars of Sheol,⁴ seen the Gaoler with the keys,⁵ and the hope had survived that a change in the Divine disposition towards him would open the door to a happier experience. When the certainty of it flashed upon him, he was too absorbed by the thought of seeing God to round off his conviction.

¹ Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality*.

² xix. 27 (margin).

⁴ xiii. 15.

³ *Table Talk*, May 29, 1830.

⁵ xiv. 13.

There is a difference between knowing a thing and realising it, and it is a man trying to grasp a reality which is still strange and shadowy, who keeps on repeating : "I shall see God—I shall see Him for myself—yes, mine eyes shall behold him." But it marks a real advance in Job's experience, and though he is ultimately satisfied with a vision of God which came far short of communion after death¹ his declaration stands for a splendid witness to the unseen, crowning with triumph all his search for truth. It is the spirit of Job rising above his circumstances, his tribute to the inalienable rights of conscience, his conviction that the righteousness of God must be made clear, that gives him an honourable place among the goodly fellowship of the prophets.

IV.

Whatever view we take of the prospect which gladdened the heart of Job it is noticeable that it is not referred to in the succeeding story, and this silence has raised many questions.

We can understand the silence of the friends, for they are standing on much lower spiritual ground than Job ; but if he fought his way to this height of faith, why do we find him so soon in the depths ? The question assumes that Job already sees light on the mystery of his suffering, which he does not see ; that he has reached some resting-place for body and soul, which he has not reached. It ignores the fact that his friends are still present to damp his spiritual ardour or provide fuel for his helpless indignation. Yet a study of Job's after-thoughts clearly shows that the discovery he has made deeply

¹ xlii. 5.

affected and permanently enriched his mind ; making him less self-centred, calmer, more free to examine the arguments of his friends and definitely refute their fallacies. It led to still greater results. Some of the darker aspects of his problem will seem to fade into the background. No further will he seek to penetrate the secret of death, and that coming event no longer casts its shadows over him. God is still unknown, but henceforth He is not regarded as a stranger or an enemy ; Job has mastered the old haunting dread of a Divine visitation, and welcomes the thought of a day when spirit with spirit can meet. The vision will become obscured, darkness will descend upon him ; but when all human voices are hushed, the light of heaven will pierce the gloom, and the heart which cried for the living God will see His face and be satisfied.

CHAPTER X

JOB'S APPEAL TO TRUTH AND EXPERIENCE

“My dear friend, clear your *mind* of cant. . . . You may *talk* as other people do . . . but don't *think* foolishly.”—SAMUEL JOHNSON.

CHAPTER XX.

1. Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,
2. Therefore do my thoughts give answer to me,
Even by reason of my haste that is in me.
3. I have heard the reproof which putteth me to shame,
And the spirit of my understanding answereth me.
4. Knowest thou *not* this of old time,
Since man was placed upon earth,
5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short,
And the joy of the godless but for a moment?
6. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens,
And his head reach unto the clouds ;
7. Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung :
They which have seen him shall say, Where is he ?
8. He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found :
Yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.
9. The eye which saw him shall see him no more ;
Neither shall his place any more behold him.
10. His children shall seek the favour of the poor,
And his hands shall give back his wealth.
11. His bones are full of his youth,
But it shall lie down with him in the dust.
12. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth,
Though he hide it under his tongue ;
13. Though he spare it, and will not let it go,
But keep it still within his mouth ;
14. Yet his meat in his bowels is turned,
It is the gall of asps within him.
15. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up
again :
God shall cast them out of his belly.
16. He shall suck the poison of asps :
The viper's tongue shall slay him.
17. He shall not look upon the rivers,
The flowing streams of honey and butter.

18. That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down ;
According to the substance that he hath gotten, he shall not rejoice.
19. For he hath oppressed and forsaken the poor ;
He hath violently taken away an house, and he shall not build it up.
20. Because he knew no quietness within him,
He shall not save aught of that wherein he delighteth.
21. There was nothing left that he devoured not ;
Therefore his prosperity shall not endure.
22. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits :
The hand of every one that is in misery shall come upon him.
23. When he is about to fill his belly,
God shall cast the fierceness of his wrath upon him,
And shall rain it upon him while he is eating.
24. He shall flee from the iron weapon,
And the bow of brass shall strike him through.
25. He draweth it forth, and it cometh out of his body :
Yea, the glittering point cometh out of his gall ;
Terrors are upon him.
26. All darkness is laid up for his treasures :
A fire not blown *by man* shall devour him ;
It shall consume that which is left in his tent.
27. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity,
And the earth shall rise up against him.
28. The increase of his house shall depart,
His goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.
29. This is the portion of a wicked man from God,
And the heritage appointed unto him by God.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. Hear diligently my speech ;
And let this be your consolations.
3. Suffer me, and I also will speak ;
And after that I have spoken, mock on.
4. As for me, is my complaint to man ?
And why should I not be impatient ?
5. Mark me, and be astonished,
And lay your hand upon your mouth.
6. Even when I remember I am troubled,
And horror taketh hold on my flesh.
7. Wherefore do the wicked live,
Become old, yea, wax mighty in power ?
8. Their seed is established with them in their sight,
And their offspring before their eyes.

9. Their houses are safe from fear,
Neither is the rod of God upon them.
10. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not ;
Their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.
11. They send forth their little ones like a flock,
And their children dance.
12. They sing to the timbrel and harp,
And rejoyce at the sound of the pipe.
13. They spend their days in prosperity,
And in a moment they go down to Sheol.
14. Yet they said unto God, Depart from us ;
For we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
15. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ?
And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him ?
16. Lo, their prosperity is not in their hand ;
The counsel of the wicked is far from me.
17. How oft is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out ?
That their calamity cometh upon them ?
That *God* distributeth sorrows in his anger ?
18. That they are as stubble before the wind,
And as chaff that the storm carrieth away ?
19. *Ye say*, God layeth up his iniquity for his children,
Let him recompense it unto himself, that he may know it.
20. Let his own eyes see his destruction,
And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.
21. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him,
When the number of his months is cut off in the midst ?
22. Shall any teach God knowledge ?
Seeing he judgeth those that are high.
23. One dieth in his full strength,
Being wholly at ease and quiet :
24. His breasts are full of milk,
And the marrow of his bones is moistened.
25. And another dieth in bitterness of soul,
And never tasteth of good.
26. They lie down alike in the dust,
And the worm covereth them.
27. Behold, I know your thoughts,
And the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me.
28. For ye say, Where is the house of the prince ?
And where is the tent wherein the wicked dwelt ?
29. Have ye not asked them that go by the way ?
And do ye not know their tokens ?
30. That the evil man is reserved to the day of calamity ?
That they are led forth to the day of wrath ?
31. Who shall declare his way to his face ?
And who shall repay him what he hath done ?
32. Yet shall he be borne to the grave,
And shall keep watch over the tomb.

33. The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him,
 And all men shall draw after him,
 As there were innumerable before him.
34. How then comfort ye me in vain,
 Seeing in your answers there remaineth *only* falsehood?

ZOPHAR makes no allusion to Job's declaration of faith, and maintains the old argument with a vehemence, a coarseness of expression, which defeats the charm of his eloquence.

. . . my thoughts give answer to me,
 Even by reason of the haste that is in me.¹

No doubt he is nettled by the distinct threat of judgment with which Job concluded his speech,² and with something of the haste of the man who blurted out, "All men are liars," is carried away by a rush of feeling. It is "the utterance of a partisan who, mistaking the passionate resentment of wounded vanity for the inspiration of true religion, magnifies God's strictness with a zeal He will not own."³

I.

Zophar moralises very much on the lines of Bildad, but whilst the latter enlarged upon the certainty of the sinner's downfall from the moral order of the world, Zophar speaks of the brevity of the wicked man's prosperity in view of the fact that wickedness brings about its own swift retribution. "The triumphing of the wicked is short." The pride that mounted up to the heavens, the head that was lost in the clouds, shall suddenly fall, and all the pomp of yesterday shall fade away as a dream.⁴ All the ill-gotten wealth of the oppressor will have to be disgorged. He shall be cut off in the prime of life,

¹ xx. 2.

² xix. 29.

³ Strahn.

⁴ xx. 5-9.

and sin, so sweet in the mouth, shall act like poison, so swift is the recoil of sin itself on the sinner.

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us.¹

Retribution corresponds to the sin; every man creates his own Inferno; insatiable greediness is recompensed by want and beggary. Zophar piles on the agony as his imagination kindles, and the final touches of the picture, when heaven and earth conspire to complete the wicked man's confusion, seem to recall the fire from heaven with the rush of human forces which overwhelmed the house of Job. No personal application is needed. "This is the portion of a wicked man from God." The words of Zophar the Naamathite are ended.

This is the last time we shall hear Zophar's voice until we see a very different man, humbled under Divine correction, and thankful to be the subject of Job's intercessory prayer.² The fault of this blunt moralist was common to the three friends—spiritual satisfaction without any spiritual growth. The basis of Zophar's teaching is the basis of morality, and the Psalmist preached from the same text.

Fret not thyself because of evildoers,
Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.
For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.³

The verdict of history corroborates this faith, but growing experience was forced to the conclusion that there was no time-limit in the Divine working. Faith took a distinct step forward when it found its highest joy, not in any swiftness of the Divine judgment, but in present fellowship with

¹ *King Lear*, v. 3.

² Chapter xlii.

³ Ps. xxxvii.

God,¹ and Job represents a further advance in the conviction that, in the face of established anomalies, this world must be regarded as but one act in an unfinished drama. The delays of God do not nullify the law of righteousness, but demand an extension of indefinite time in all calculations of its workings. Zophar has not graduated in this school. He is content to repeat orthodox language, unaware of the danger of storing the mind with religious phrases without continually taking stock of their value. This is the way that religion becomes tainted with cant. We may talk as other people do in accepted religious terms, but right thinking must be the regulating principle in religion. Zophar has never cleared his *mind* of cant, never tested speech by reality, and he is to learn the lesson of his life from a truth-teller who has been delivered from all self-deception.

II.

It is easy to misunderstand Job at this juncture. Some have thought that he is still carried away by feeling to utter words he would have regretted in a calmer moment,² but a fairer view of Job's mind will credit him with the intention of clearing up issues which have been obscured by disputation. Hitherto he has been absorbed by the question of his relation to God. Now that the tension has been somewhat relieved, he feels more free to face a complicated situation by a forcible appeal to truth and experience. Even if the problem of the world is darker than his friends think, it is better to admit this than

¹ Ps. lxxiii.

² Ewald.

live in a fool's paradise. He invites their close attention to what he is about to bring before them.

Hear diligently my speech ;
And let this be your consolations.
Suffer me, and I also will speak ;
And after that I have spoken, mock on.¹

He will not allow the matter between himself and his friends to degenerate into a personal one: "Is my complaint to man?" He is not seeking any logical triumph over them, and, so far from cherishing the spirit of self-confidence, is awe-struck by the solemnity of the whole subject.² The problem that troubles him is, "Why do the wicked prosper?" His friends have denied that they do, but what are the facts? Have they the courage to face the whole evidence? Look broadly at the world, and you will see the wicked mighty in power, living on the fat of the land, with large families, who attain a good old age, and die a natural death.³ Religious problems do not puzzle them. They seem to get on just as well without God as with Him, and run into no danger of mixing up business with religion. They say frankly, religion does not pay. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?⁴ "Business is business": this is the maxim by which they regulate their relations with God. Bildad has said, "The light of the wicked shall be put out," but how often does this happen?⁵ I ask the question again: How often can it be said of them that they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away? If you say that the sins of the fathers are

¹ xxi. 2, 3.

² xxi. 6.

³ xxi. 7-13.

⁴ xxi. 15.

⁵ xxi. 17. In the R.V. this is a question, not a statement, as in the A.V., and the change is very significant.

visited on the children to the third and fourth generations, then I say that this does not fulfil the demands of justice. Let not the innocent suffer, but let each individual stand and fall by his own desert.¹ Look steadily at life, and you will have to admit that there is no mechanical adjustment of reward and punishment to be found. Happiness and sorrow are indiscriminately distributed; "one dieth in his full strength . . . another dieth in bitterness of soul."² If you lived in a bigger world than your own circle, travellers could have told you tales which would have opened your eyes.

Have ye not asked them that go by the way?
And do ye not know their tokens?³

They could have told you of many an evildoer whose last end was as peaceful as any of the righteous. The godless prince has a stately funeral and a guard keeps watch over his tomb.⁴ In the bosom of the fragrant earth "the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him," and a life so full of unbroken happiness, rounded off by such a sleep, will attract many to follow his steps, just as many had preceded him in the same path.⁵ If these things are true, as they are, why not admit them instead of glozing them over and extracting comfort from a false theory of life? Such are the painful truths Job brings to the notice of his friends, which (if we forget his special purpose) seem a terrible indictment of the moral government of the world. He is even exposing himself to the charge, afterwards

¹ The old view that posterity is punished for ancestral sins is repudiated here, as in Jer. xxxi. 29 and Ezek. xviii. 4.

² xxi. 23-4.

³ xxi. 29.

⁴ Some think that the "watcher" is an allusion to the effigy of the dead man watching over the tomb (xxi. 32).

⁵ xxi. 33.

levelled against him,¹ of being in sympathy with the wicked prosperous man, when all the time he is seeking, at any cost, to be loyal to the truth as he sees it. No doubt the personal element does enter into his speech, for he knows that all allusions to the wicked man are indirectly aimed at himself; but this does not prevent him from taking broad views of life. Job does not see everything in true proportion, for the wicked man no more enjoys the idyllic life he has sketched than he suffers the swift doom portrayed by Zophar. He is simply contending that all moral decisions should depend on evidence, and, whilst his friends are bolstering up a case in the interest of a dogma, he has pledged himself to truth.

III.

Job's main argument that the ways of God are unequal in the present life has never been controverted. It is the admission with which Butler begins his famous chapter on moral government,² a conclusion forced upon all honest observation. Froude has stated the same facts with characteristic frankness: "The thoroughly vicious man is, no doubt, wretched enough; . . . but the worldly, prudent, self-restraining man, with his five senses, which he knows how to gratify with tempered indulgence, . . . feels no wretchedness. . . . Though he be the basest and most contemptible slave of his own selfishness, Providence will not interfere to punish him. . . . Nature is indifferent. . . . A man with no high aspirations who thrives and makes money and envelops himself in comforts is as happy as such

¹ xxii. 15.

² *Analogy of Religion*, Part I., chapter i.

a nature can be."¹ Emerson² worked out a theory of compensation which, in some respects, may be regarded as a modern rendering of Zophar's argument. If we give things their true value, he urged, we shall find that justice is never deferred. Every act rewards itself—every act so swiftly recoils on character that you cannot do wrong without suffering wrong, any more than you can love without being loved. The thief steals from himself, and the generous are blessed in the act of giving. This may be nearer the truth than Zophar's reasoning, but it does not bear close scrutiny, for Emerson's contention that "all love is mathematically just" can never be worked out as an algebraic formula.

Such a doctrine ignores the demands of our moral consciousness, for it still remains true that we cannot always see this compensation, and often have to face the exact opposite of what we should expect to result from the pursuit of good and evil. If this were frankly admitted there would be no serious quarrel between the philosopher and the preacher. "The philosopher asks nothing more than that the conception of God should be wide enough to cover *what we see*, that it shall not be arbitrarily framed to serve certain ends, that it shall be inclusive of everything which is discovered beyond Uz and its tabernacle."³ In this desire religion and philosophy are really one. Both are committed to truth, which "needs no policies nor stratagems nor licences to make her victorious."⁴

¹ *Short Studies*, "The Book of Job," vol. i.

² *Essays*, First Series: "Compensation."

³ Mark Rutherford, *Notes on the Book of Job*.

⁴ Milton, *Areopagitica*.

IV.

We shall only understand Job's point of view through his definite intention to cure Zophar and his friends of the vicious habit, not only of talking, but of thinking foolishly. He brings before them this terrible array of facts, that they may see things as they are and not as they are led to believe through accepting a comfortable theory of life. But it is noticeable that, whilst Job is sure of his facts, he does not handle them in the oracular way his friends have spoken. He does not speak as though his judgment were infallible, as though he were the mouthpiece of God. These are undoubted facts of experience, but he does not say that they are *all* the facts which can possibly be known.¹ He knows that he has only touched the fringe of the mystery of the universe. "Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways,"² he will say to those who, in their exact adjustment of conduct and destiny, were really putting their own wisdom on a level with the Divine. Who can presume to teach Almighty Wisdom how the world should be governed? Shall any teach God knowledge?³

Go, wiser thou ! and in thy scale of sense
Weigh thy opinion against Providence,
Call imperfection what thou fanciest such,
Say here He gives too little, here too much.

Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His justice, be the God of God !⁴

Job does not make that mistake. The argument of his friends breaks down, but he has no theory of

¹ In fact, in chapter xxvii., he makes a surprising admission which seems to contradict them.

² xxvi. 14.

³ xxi. 22.

⁴ Pope, *Essay on Man*.

his own to set in its place, and even if he establishes the fact that the method of the Divine government is not clear, and, on the basis of swift justice, is imperfect, he does not profess to be able to solve the mystery. Those who call Job's answer to Zophar the gloomiest of his utterances¹ naturally point to the implications involved in his conclusions. If he can see so much moral disorder in the world, has he lost that hold upon God he seemed to have? We still need to explain the language of this chapter in the light of his discovery of One who will vindicate his own character, but if we are disappointed at its sombre tone, we have to remember that, whilst Job has caught a glimpse of a larger hope, God is still unknown, and seems far away from him. He still has to wrestle with perplexities "until the morning breaks and the shadows flee away." He might have thought that all his sufferings were worth while for the sake of discerning that glorious future when he would see God face to face; but, if that were the lesson he had to learn, and had learnt it, the teacher still showed no intention of sparing the rod. Job might well have said:

Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
And I have had troubles enough for one.²

But it is one of the painful facts of experience that discipline does not cease even though it seems to have served its purpose. If the judgments of God are not swift, neither are His benedictions, and Job has still to humble himself under the mighty hand of God before he is lifted up. Yet he is

¹ Bradley.

² R. Browning, *Old Pictures in Florence*.

travelling an upward way, in spite of the mists that envelop him, for he is learning that it is not in the possession of happiness itself that the difference lies between the good and the bad. Job has never served God on such terms, and he is learning now that to trust God is better than any happiness, though it be with wounded feet and bleeding brow.

CHAPTER XI

“OH THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM !”

There are two kinds of people one can call reasonable : those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, and those who seek Him with all their heart because they do not know Him.—PASCAL : *Thoughts*, 194.

God is never sought in vain even when we do not find Him.—ST. BERNARD.

CHAPTER XXII.

1. Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,
2. Can a man be profitable unto God ?
Surely he that is wise is profitable unto himself.
3. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous ?
Or is it gain *to him*, that thou makest thy ways perfect ?
4. Is it for thy fear *of him* that he reproveth thee,
That he entereth with thee into judgement ?
5. Is not thy wickedness great ?
Neither is there any end to thine iniquities.
6. For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought,
And stripped the naked of their clothing.
7. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,
And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.
8. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth ;
And the honourable man, he dwelt in it.
9. Thou hast sent widows away empty,
And the arms of the fatherless have been broken.
10. Therefore snares are round about thee,
And sudden fear troubleth thee,
11. Or darkness, that thou canst not see,
And abundance of waters cover thee.
12. Is not God in the height of heaven ?
And behold the height of the stars, how high they are !
13. And thou sayest, What doth God know ?
Can he judge through the thick darkness ?
14. Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not ;
And he walketh in the circuit of heaven.
15. Wilt thou keep the old way
Which wicked men have trodden ?
16. Who were snatched away before their time,
Whose foundation was poured out as a stream :

17. Who said unto God, Depart from us ;
And, What can the Almighty do for us ?
18. Yet he filled their houses with good things :
But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.
19. The righteous see it, and are glad ;
And the innocent laugh them to scorn :
20. *Saying*, Surely they that did rise up against us are cut off,
And the remnant of them the fire hath consumed.
21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace :
Thereby good shall come unto thee.
22. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth,
And lay up his words in thine heart.
23. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up ;
If thou put away unrighteousness far from thy tents.
24. And lay thou *thy* treasure in the dust,
And the *gold of Ophir* among the stones of the brooks ;
25. And the Almighty shall be thy treasure,
And precious silver unto thee.
26. For then shalt thou delight thyself in the Almighty,
And shalt lift up thy face unto God.
27. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee ;
And thou shalt pay thy vows.
28. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established
unto thee ;
And light shall shine upon thy ways.
29. When they cast *thee* down, thou shalt say, *There is* lifting up ;
And the humble person he shall save.
30. He shall deliver *even* him that is not innocent :
Yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of thine
hands.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. Even to-day is my complaint rebellious :
My stroke is heavier than my groaning.
3. Oh that I knew where I might find him,
That I might come even to his seat !
4. I would order my cause before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
5. I would know the words which he would answer me,
And understand what he would say unto me.
6. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power ?
Nay ; but he would give heed unto me.
7. There the upright might reason with him ;
So should I be delivered for ever from my judge.
8. Behold, I go forward, but he is not *there* ;
And backward, but I cannot perceive him :
9. On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold
him :
He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.

10. But he knoweth the way that I take ;
When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.
11. My foot hath held fast to his steps ;
His way have I kept, and turned not aside.
12. I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips ;
I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my
necessary food.
13. But he is in one *mind*, and who can turn him ?
And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.
14. For he performeth that which is appointed for me :
And many such things are with him.
15. Therefore am I troubled at his presence ;
When I consider, I am afraid of him.
16. For God hath made my heart faint,
And the Almighty hath troubled me :
17. Because I was not cut off before the darkness,
Neither did he cover the thick darkness from my face.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1. Why are times not laid up by the Almighty ?
And why do not they which know him see his days ?
2. There are that remove the landmarks ;
They violently take away flocks, and feed them.
3. They drive away the ass of the fatherless,
They take the widow's ox for a pledge.
4. They turn the needy out of the way :
The poor of the earth hide themselves together.
5. Behold, as wild asses in the desert
They go forth to their work, seeking diligently for meat ;
The wilderness *yieldeth* them food for their children.
6. They cut their provender in the field ;
And they glean the vintage of the wicked.
7. They lie all night naked without clothing,
And have no covering in the cold.
8. They are wet with the showers of the mountains,
And embrace the rock for want of a shelter.
9. There are that pluck the fatherless from the breast,
And take a pledge of the poor :
10. *So that* they go about naked without clothing,
And being an-hungered they carry the sheaves ;
11. They make oil within the walls of these men ;
They tread *their* winepresses, and suffer thirst.
12. From out of the populous city men groan,
And the soul of the wounded crieth out :
Yet God imputeth it not for folly.
13. These are of them that rebel against the light ;
They know not the ways thereof,
Nor abide in the paths thereof.

14. The murderer riseth with the light, he killeth the poor and needy ;
And in the night he is as a thief.
15. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight,
Saying, No eye shall see me :
And he disguiseth his face.
16. In the dark they dig through houses :
They shut themselves up in the daytime ;
They know not the light.
17. For the morning is to all of them as the shadow of death ;
For they know the terrors of the shadow of death.
18. He is swift upon the face of the waters ;
Their portion is cursed in the earth ;
He turneth not by the way of the vineyards.
19. Drought and heat consume the snow waters :
So doth Sheol those which have sinned.
20. The womb shall forget him ; the worm shall feed sweetly on him ;
He shall be no more remembered :
And unrighteousness shall be broken as a tree.
21. He devoureth the barren that beareth not :
And doeth not good to the widow.
22. He draweth away the mighty also by his power :
He riseth up, and no man is sure of life.
23. *God* giveth them to be in security, and they rest thereon ;
And his eyes are upon their ways.
24. They are exalted ; yet a little while, and they are gone ;
Yea, they are brought low, they are taken out of the way as all other,
And are cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.
25. And if it be not so now, who will prove me a liar,
And make my speech nothing worth ?

THE three friends have exhausted their arguments on the character of God and the evidence of His Providence, as seen in the fate of the wicked. As Job has challenged the truth of their statements, the only course which now seems open to them is to declare what they have already hinted at, and charge Job with the specific sins which had brought about his own downfall. "So strong is the superstition of the friends, that Eliphaz now advances to a creation of crimes which Job must have committed. It is more easy to believe him to be a sinner than

that their creed can be shaken."¹ Job has spoken as if no moral principle could be discerned in the world, and his fascinating picture of the felicity of the wicked suggests that, in spite of his own profession, he is in secret sympathy with ways that are so successful. It is this suspicion² which rouses Eliphaz to a white heat of indignation and carries him beyond all bounds in telling Job of the guilt which lies at his door. To Eliphaz, moving in a calm region of thought, God has become the cold, passionless Ruler, unaffected by human conduct, whose laws of retribution work automatically, like laws of nature. With this fixed idea, he argues in a cool, dispassionate way, warning Job not to attribute to Deity any human feeling or draw conclusions from any human analogies.

Can a man be profitable unto God?

Surely he that is wise is profitable unto himself.

Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?

Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?³

Let Job banish all such notions from his mind. His case is quite simple. Since God has no interest in man's righteousness and cannot be punishing Job for his piety, it is clear that he must be a great sinner. But, with Eliphaz, head and heart are in contradiction. He cannot stifle sympathy with the friend with whom he is at cross-purposes. Eliphaz is nobly inconsistent. The heart asserts itself against a hard dogma, and the speech closes with an exhortation which reveals both tender conceptions of God and hopeful prospects for Job.

I.

The crimes with which Job is charged are those to which the rich and powerful are specially prone,

¹ Mark Rutherford.

² xxii. 15.

³ xxii. 2.

not the subtle sins of heterodoxy, but those which denote an irresponsible life—selfishness, dishonesty, hard-heartedness, and avarice. “What a world that must have been,” exclaims Mark Rutherford,¹ “where the Church’s anathemas were reserved for him who exacted pledges from his brother, who neglected the famishing, and who paid undue respect to the great!” Eliphaz has a high standard of social morality, and his catalogue of sins which are most displeasing to God would arouse our admiration if the charge had not been misapplied. For Job seems to have been remarkable for a sense of humanity which made indifference to the claims of the poor and needy abhorrent to him, and to clear himself from such imputations he will presently take a solemn oath of innocence.² But Eliphaz will not allow himself to believe it, and thinks he can explain the cause of his defiance of God’s laws. Is not God exalted above the stars? Yes, you say, far too exalted to regard man’s ways.³ Job is presuming on this, as wicked men have done before him, but a glance at history would convince him of his mistake. Rebels of old time defied God, but they were swept away by the Flood and destroyed in the cities of the plain. Let Job take warning from their awful fate.⁴

These ideas should have frozen the heart of Eliphaz at its source, and made him incapable of speaking any words of comfort to the sufferer; but, all unconsciously, the feelings of the man melt the coldness of the theologian, and the last words of Eliphaz turn from threats to promises, from judgments to alluring hopes.

¹ *The Book of Job.*

³ xxii. 12, 14.

² Chapter xxxi.

⁴ xxii. 15-20.

Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace :
Thereby good shall come unto thee.¹

The force of this appeal is weakened by the assumption of Job's guilt, and it is quite inconsistent with the main article of Eliphaz's creed, for a passionless Creator, aloof from human life, admits no acquaintance to man; but, in spite of these blemishes, the picture he draws of a man restored to fellowship with God, finding all his treasure in heaven, creates that conception of true religion which was the endless theme of psalmists and prophets. False to his own theories but true to the heart, Eliphaz shakes off the faults of the dogmatist and once more rises to the stature of the prophet. A true knowledge of God brings no unrest, but a peace which passeth understanding—secure within, the man of God fears no losses without, and religion becomes a delightful commerce between God and the soul. Every Divine promise is included in this: "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Faith in God can stand all tests, and the sinner, enjoying once more the Divine favour, shall even qualify to fulfil the rôle of intercessor on behalf of his fellow-men:

He shall deliver him that is not innocent :
Yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of thine hands.²

The words of Eliphaz the Temanite are ended. We part company with a man who, in spite of limited vision, has uttered truths which give him an honourable place among the wise. We have been impressed by his august conception of God

¹ xxii. 21.

² xxii. 30 (A.V. mistranslates this). An unconscious prophecy of what actually happened. See xlii. 8.

and the reality of his spiritual experience. He has shown unmistakable proof of his regard for Job by touches of tenderness, disclosures of a possible happiness yet in store for him; but a defective theology has led him all astray, chilled his sympathies, and warped his judgment. This is more than intellectual failure—it is the sin of closing the mind against light. Without an enquiring spirit, without sympathy for special problems, the most glorious truths may be misapplied, become perverted, even prove to be false; and Eliphaz is condemned by contrast with the spirit of Job, ever seeking, ever striving after the hidden harmony between revelation and experience. The day will come when the Divine judgment shall decide between them—repudiate a blind adherence to traditionalism, and accept the nobler offering of a heart dedicated to the discovery of truth.

II.

In Job's next speech we see how grandly his spirit rises above personalities, all resentment against calumny; for it is no reply to man, but a renewed appeal to God. "I am just as rebellious as I was yesterday," he says:¹ but it is not rebellion against fate, or even at the unjust accusations which have been hurled against him. His real trouble is spiritual darkness. He cannot be reconciled to that. Why should he not be rebellious when he is baffled in his passionate longing to know God more perfectly!

Oh that I knew where I might find him,
That I might come even to his seat!

¹ xxiii. 2.

I would order my cause before him,
 And fill my mouth with arguments.
 I would know the words which he would answer me,
 And understand what he would say unto me.
 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power ?
 Nay ; but he would give heed unto me.
 There the upright might reason with him ;
 So should I be delivered for ever from my judge.¹

What an advance Job has made since he knew that his "redeemer" lived! How his thought of God has been purified, softened, spiritualised! Once, he had imagined himself at the bar of God, paralysed with fear, crushed by a sense of His omnipotence;² now, he expresses the conviction that the sight of God would not overwhelm him, that God would listen to his plea and answer him with a sweet reasonableness. Now, he is sure that if he could find God He would prove to be his friend. But, where is He?

Behold, I go forward, but he is not *there* ;
 And backward, but I cannot perceive him :
 On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him :
 He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.³

God is all-pervading, yet eludes search. We are listening to a man who is feeling after a presence which he has lost. Job had found God long ago—in nature, in providence, in his own religious experience; but he has lost Him; and he is now following old familiar tracks, tracing out footprints which speak unmistakably of a Divine presence once very dear to him. Forward, backward, on the right hand and on the left, in the path of history, in the corridors of memory—God has been there. But now—He is not to be found. This makes the poignancy of Job's grief: a vanished hand, a voice

¹ xxiii. 3-7.² See ix. 14-20.³ xxiii. 8.

that is still. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself."

But, if God's ways are inscrutable, Job is sustained by the consoling thought that his ways are not hidden from God.

He knoweth the way that I take;

When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.¹

We must not read into these words more than a bold venture of faith in the ultimate result of his trial. God's ways are still unknown, but Job has stumbled upon a clue, the value of which he does not realise. It was reserved for another² to disclose the full meaning of this figure, and teach the purifying influence of sorrow. All that Job can hope is that the trial to which he is subjected will prove that he is sterling metal. Job is not thinking of discipline as a means of smelting out the dross, but rather as the touchstone which tests the quality of the gold. He believes he will stand the test, and if this sounds very much like self-righteousness we must also remember that in Job's predicament there was no room for false humility. His conviction of moral steadfastness is the only possession of which he has not been bereft. "His good conscience is the foundation of his faith in the goodness of the universe. . . . Even when he has doubted God he has never doubted goodness, never relaxed his hold of the moral law or questioned its eternal validity. His tenacity has been his salvation."³ But Job still walks in darkness, and his saddest thought is no doubt wrapped up in the enigmatic phrase,

But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?⁴

A changeless God looks like a fixed, unalterable destiny, and whenever Job thinks of God like that

¹ xxiii. 10.

² Elihu.

³ Strahn.

⁴ xxiii. 13.

he is afraid of Him. Some of that fear grips him now, but he has learnt to master it; for he knows in his heart that he is not confronted by a motionless Sphinx or stared at by an evil Eye, but is in the hands of One who hides His face behind a frowning Providence.

III.

Job still pursues his search for God. He looks for Him again in the administration of justice. Why, he daringly asks, has not the Almighty, as the ruler and Judge of the earth, fixed times—days of assize for the trial and punishment of offenders?¹ Job draws a vivid picture of the unconvicted exploiters of human life and their victims. The removers of landmarks, the oppressors of the fatherless and the widow, seem to have an impunity which makes them regard the poor and needy as their lawful prey. Hounded from civilisation, outcasts of society, they live in dens and caves of the earth, or crouch under the rock, seeking protection from the drenching rains from the mountains. Even in the populous city, the day labourers starve in the midst of plenty, robbed of all they possess by their rapacious creditors. In this lawless society evildoers swarm by day, and night-birds, thieves, and murderers flit to and fro in their deeds of darkness.² Who are these unfortunate people of whom Job speaks? Some think that they are the aborigines, dispossessed of their land and driven into the desert; but the mention of populous cities rather points to a corrupt civilisation, where rich and poor are sharply distinguished. He describes

¹ xxiv. 1. Elihu answers this question. See xxxiv. 23.

² xxiv. 2-17.

the social problem, ancient and modern: the violence and injustice of the world, and how by these the weaker are driven to a life of distress; how the distress is aggravated by the close contact with wealth; how such social growth crowds life in the cities and begets crime; how, finally, is formed a purely criminal class, at war with the light itself.¹ Whoever these people are, their misery touches the heart of Job, which clears his character from the base insinuation that he himself had been guilty of the same kind of sin.² Nothing reveals the humanity of Job more clearly than the fact that he can forget his own misery to claim relationship with the unfortunate and oppressed. Gorky has called one of his books by the title *Creatures that once were Men*. Battered by the shocks of doom, they seem to have lost the human likeness, but the thought in Job's mind is that nothing can do that. Beneath all disfigurement, creatures that once were men are still men, with claims upon God and man which may be forgotten, but cannot be denied.

What a parody of these facts is the popular creed!³ The orthodox conclusion is that the wicked man is only a bubble on the stream, evanescent, doomed to failure in all his enterprises, swiftly descending to the grave, where the worm shall feed sweetly on him. But this is far from the truth. In point of fact, as he has already said, they enjoy long life, and pass away by a natural and painless death. Job is only too sure of his facts, and with history and experience behind

¹ Moulton, *Job*, p. xxviii.

² See xxii. 5.

³ xxiv. 18-21 is the view of the friends (see margin: "Ye say"), which Job quotes in order to rebut it.

him exclaims, "If it be not so now, who will prove me a liar?"¹ Job is pessimistic because he cannot find any Divine calendar where a time is appointed for the vindication of justice. A later thinker, living in darker days, could say: To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven,² even though the verdict against evil may not be speedily executed.³

Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small.⁴

Job cannot rise to this, and the absence of a day of judgment in the earth overclouds his mind; but it is a noble type of depression, for he is not self-absorbed, and his own sorrow is merged in the sorrows of humanity.

IV.

"Oh that I knew where I might find him!" But has not Job already found Him? "Thou wouldst not seek Me if thou hadst not found Me" is a cryptic saying which goes to the heart of religion.⁵ Would Job have continued his search if he had not received intimations of the reality of God? There was the God of his past experience, of happy memories—

When the secret of God was upon my tent;
When the Almighty was yet with me.⁶

If Job had lost the sense of God associated with prosperous days, had he not found Him again "in the thick darkness where God is"?⁷ He had found Him in nature and conscience. Could he not say

¹ xxiv. 25.

² Eccles. iii. 1, 17.

³ Eccles. viii. 11.

⁴ Longfellow, *Retribution*, from von Logau.

⁵ Pascal.

⁶ xxix. 4.

⁷ Exod. xx. 21.

with the modern philosopher,¹ "The starry sky above me and the moral law within . . . are two things which fill the soul with ever-increasing admiration and reverence"? Was he not aware of the besetting God, who "visited him every morning, and tried him every moment"?² Was He not the Potter who fashioned the clay according to His own pattern?³ Had he not grandly declared that God's character was such that He needed no one to lie on His behalf?⁴ Had he not called Him his Vindicator,⁵ the unknown, yet ever near?⁶ And yet Job has not found the God of his deepest desire: God with the human touch, with whom he can reason and have fellowship. He may be closer to him than breathing, nearer than hands or feet, yet if He does not break the silence, does not reveal Himself in a personal way, there can be no real acquaintance with him, no peace, no true meeting of spirit with spirit. So, from the vacancy of the heart, out of an indescribable loneliness, there rises a reiterated cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

¹ Kant.

⁴ xiii. 7.

² vii. 18.

⁵ xix. 25.

³ x. 9.

⁶ xxiii. 9.

CHAPTER XII

FOLLY AND WISDOM

Expediency is man's wisdom : doing right is God's.
GEORGE MEREDITH.

CHAPTER XXV.

1. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
2. Dominion and fear are with him ;
He maketh peace in his high places.
3. Is there any number of his armies ?
And upon whom doth not his light arise ?
4. How then can man be just with God ?
Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman ?
5. Behold, even the moon hath no brightness,
And the stars are not pure in his sight :
6. How much less man, that is a worm !
And the son of man, which is a worm !

CHAPTER XXVI.

1. Then Job answered and said,
2. How hast thou helped him that is without power !
How hast thou saved the arm that hath no strength !
3. How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom,
And plentifully declared sound knowledge !
4. To whom hast thou uttered words ?
And whose spirit came forth from thee ?
5. They that are deceased tremble
Beneath the waters and the inhabitants thereof.
6. Sheol is naked before him,
And Abaddon hath no covering.
7. He stretcheth out the north over empty space,
And hangeth the earth upon nothing.
8. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds ;
And the cloud is not rent under them.
9. He closeth in the face of his throne,
And spreadeth his cloud upon it.
10. He hath described a boundary upon the face of the waters,
Unto the confines of light and darkness.
11. The pillars of heaven tremble
And are astonished at his rebuke.
12. He stirreth up the sea with his power,
And by his understanding he smiteth through Rahab.

13. By his spirit the heavens are garnished ;
His hand hath pierced the swift serpent.
14. Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways :
And how small a whisper do we hear of him !
But the thunder of his power who can understand ?

CHAPTER XXVII.

1. And Job again took up his parable, and said,
2. As God liveth, who hath taken away my right ;
And the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul ;
3. (For my life is yet whole in me,
And the Spirit of God is in my nostrils ;)
4. Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness,
Neither shall my tongue utter deceit.
5. God forbid that I should justify you :
Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me.
6. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go :
My heart shall not reproach *me* so long as I live.
7. Let mine enemy be as the wicked,
And let him that riseth up against me be as the unrighteous.
8. For what is the hope of the godless, though he get him gain,
When God taketh away his soul ?
9. Will God hear his cry,
When trouble cometh upon him ?
10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty,
And call upon God at all times ?
11. I will teach you concerning the hand of God ;
That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.
12. Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it ;
Why then are ye become altogether vain ?
13. This is the portion of a wicked man with God,
And the heritage of oppressors, which they receive from the
Almighty,
14. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword ;
And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.
15. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death,
And his widows shall make no lamentation.
16. Though he heap up silver as the dust,
And prepare raiment as the clay ;
17. He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on,
And the innocent shall divide the silver.
18. He buildeth his house as the moth,
And as a booth which the keeper maketh.
19. He lieth down rich, but he shall not be gathered ;
He openeth his eyes, and he is not.
20. Terrors overtake him like waters ;
A tempest stealeth him away in the night.
21. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth ;
And it sweepeth him out of his place.

22. For *God* shall hurl at him, and not spare :
He would fain flee out of his hand.
23. Men shall clap their hands at him,
And shall hiss him out of his place.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. Surely¹ there is a mine for silver,
And a place for gold which they refine.
2. Iron is taken out of the earth,
And brass is molten out of the stone.
3. *Man* setteth an end to darkness,
And searcheth out to the furthest bound
The stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of death.
4. He breaketh open a shaft away from where men sojourn ;
They are forgotten of the foot *that passeth by* ;
They hang afar from men, they swing to and fro.
5. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread ;
And underneath it is turned up as it were by fire.
6. The stones thereof are the place of sapphires,
And it hath dust of gold.
7. That path no bird of prey knoweth,
Neither hath the falcon's eye seen it :
8. The proud beasts have not trodden it,
Nor hath the fierce lion passed thereby.
9. He putteth forth his hand upon the flinty rock,
He overturneth the mountains by the roots.
10. He cutteth out channels among the rocks ;
And his eye seeth every precious thing.
11. He bindeth the streams that they trickle not ;
And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.
12. But where shall wisdom be found ?
And where is the place of understanding ?
13. *Man* knoweth not the price thereof ;
Neither is it found in the land of the living.
14. The deep saith, It is not in me :
And the sea saith, It is not with me.
15. It cannot be gotten for gold,
Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.
16. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir,
With the precious onyx, or the sapphire.
17. Gold and glass cannot equal it :
Neither shall the exchange thereof be jewels of fine gold.
18. No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal :
Yea, the price of wisdom is above rubies.
19. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,
Neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

¹ "For" (margin).

20. Whence then cometh wisdom ?
And where is the place of understanding ?
21. Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living,
And kept close from the fowls of the air.
22. Destruction and Death say,
We have heard a rumour thereof with our ears.
23. God understandeth the way thereof,
And he knoweth the place thereof.
24. For he looketh to the ends of the earth,
And seeth under the whole heaven ;
25. To make a weight for the wind ;
Yea, he meteth out the waters by measure.
26. When he made a decree for the rain,
And a way for the lightning of the thunder :
27. Then did he see it, and declare it ;
He established it, yea, and searched it out.
28. And unto man he said,
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ;
And to depart from evil is understanding.

BILDAD has very little more to say, and it is the last word we shall hear from the three friends. They cannot deny the facts that Job has stated, and will not prolong a debate which has already broken the canons of friendship and good taste. Yet Bildad cannot retire without uttering a protest against the spirit of Job, which he regards as quite unbecoming to a religious man. He can only repeat what he has already said : let the facts of history brought forward by Job be as they may, how should man, "who is a worm," seek to justify himself before a holy, omnipotent Creator ? The words of Bildad the Shuhite are ended.¹ As we hear the voices of Job's friends die away we may pay a final tribute to their sincerity, whilst we cannot forget that they were the last people in the world to minister to a man in his plight. We can only conjecture how different the story of Job would have been if the character of his friends had been different. Cole-

¹ Chapter xxv.

ridge once expressed his keen regret that he had never met Shelley :¹ " He went to Keswick on purpose to see me and unfortunately fell in with Southey instead. There could have been nothing more unfortunate. Southey had no understanding for or toleration of such principles as Shelley's. I should have laughed at his atheism. I could have sympathised with him . . . shown him that I had once been in the same state myself, and guided him through it." Southey, with his plodding, unimaginative mind, was as incapable of understanding Shelley as the three friends were of understanding Job, and Coleridge was the ideal friend for a man troubled with spiritual difficulties seeking a wider vision of truth. But, whilst Shelley never recovered his spiritual balance, there was both loss and gain in Job's experience, for though the loss of companionship sent him on a lonely quest, he was cheered by visions which opened out a new world of spiritual discovery.

I.

Job cannot refrain from an ironical retort as Bildad concludes the argument for his friends and himself : " How hast thou helped him that is without power!"² Nothing that they have said really touches the problem of Providence as raised by the anomaly of his own position. Bildad appears to Job as a mere moralist—

One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
Nor form, nor feeling, great or small ;
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual All-in-all.³

¹ See Hogg's *Life of Shelley* and record of John Frere in *Cornhill Magazine*, December, 1830.

² xxvi. 2.

³ *A Poet's Epitaph* (Wordsworth).

They assume that they have been talking to a man without power or strength or wisdom, but what evidence have they given of any superior wisdom? How vital is the difference between the enquiring mind of Job and the self-sufficiency of his friends! Job can speak as eloquently as they about the being of God, but how conscious he is of his limitations! He would teach them now that God is not only the ruling principle in theology, but One who governs heaven and earth and all things under the earth! Far beneath the ocean bed lies the underworld. There the shades—pale, bloodless shadows of their former selves—tremble before the Divine gaze, for “Sheol is naked before him, and Abaddon hath no covering.”¹ Let them lift up their eyes to the heavens. That northern sky so richly studded with constellations is stretched over the vast emptiness.

“He hangeth the earth upon nothing.” Job is not speaking the language of science, but, as a child of Nature, his mind is filled with growing wonder and awe. The more he looks away from himself and human systems the more wonderful are the works of God, and the more he will escape from limited views of the Divine government. This child gazes at the rain-clouds,² and wonders that they do not burst under the weight of waters they contain. It is a mystery. Clouds and darkness are round about Him. When He speaks the thunder rolls, “the pillars of heaven tremble.”

He stirreth up the sea with his power,
And by his understanding he smiteth through Rahab.

¹ Abaddon = destruction.

² xxvi. 8. See Elihu on the clouds (xxxvi. 37).

By his spirit the heavens are garnished ;
His hand hath pierced the swift serpent.¹

God's way is in the sea. Both in the lashing of its fury and its calm we see Omnipotence moving in a mysterious way, planting His footsteps in the sea and riding upon the storm. Nothing can withstand His power, for God's breath clears away all sinister signs in the sky, chasing away the powers of darkness, and a cloudy day ends with a golden sunset. By such an appeal Job proves that his spiritual imagination is not inferior to his friends, but how different is the effect upon them and him ! It gave them a self-sufficient view of God and the world, whilst it makes Job feel more deeply how much of the Divine nature is hidden from him.

He is humbled by the revelation of God in nature, preparing him for the great apocalypse when he shall hear God speaking through the storm. All he knows now is, that he has seen but a fringe of the mystery of the universe, heard but a faint, far-off murmur of the Divine working.

Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways :
And how small a whisper do we hear of him !
But the thunder of his power who can understand ?²

II.

No human voice replies. We expect to hear the jarring tone of Zophar, whose turn it is to speak, but he does not break the silence. Job is left alone to wrestle with an unseen Presence "until the breaking of the day." He is about to make one of

¹ xxvi. 12, 13. Rahab is the sea, typical of primeval power. The swift serpent was supposed to cause the eclipse of the sun (see Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, p. 296).

² xxvi. 14.

his finest declarations, but, before he does so, he makes an admission which we did not expect from him. Job's difficulty has been in the immunity of the wicked from swift penalties, a statement which his friends have persistently denied ; but now, he comes suddenly round to their way of thinking and endorses their conclusions :

For what is the hope of the godless, though he get him gain,
When God taketh away his soul ?

For God shall hurl at him, and not spare :

He would fain flee out of his hand.

Men shall clap their hands at him,

And shall hiss him out of his place.¹

Now, it is not necessary to prove that Job is always consistent, for sorrow is invariably illogical. He has no theory of the universe such as his friends profess to have, but simply states the truth as he sees it from time to time. The silence of Zophar compels him to review the whole situation, and we hear him speak in a more solemn, ordered way than before. This form of speech is called "a parable,"² for it represents the serious tone of a mind relieved from the tension of argument, trying to look at life steadily and see truth in its proper proportions. With the solemnity of an oath, flinging his whole soul into the affirmation, Job reasserts his innocence.

Prostrate before God and man, he has not lost his spirit or failed in his resolution never to confuse moral distinctions, never to call black white or lie on God's behalf :

Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness,
Neither shall my tongue utter deceit.

¹ See xxvii. 8-23. Also critical note E in Appendix.

² An elevated discourse in a sententious strain (Driver).

So long as he is free from such disloyalty to truth he will have nothing to regret as long as he lives.¹ And now, speaking no longer as a defendant but as a teacher, Job effectually clears himself from the imputation that his misfortunes have blunted his moral sense. "I will teach you concerning the hand of God." He will not teach them anything they do not know; he will preach from their text, but he will not misuse it, not pervert its meaning, not preach *at* them. He holds the wicked man as much in abhorrence as they do, although, in the interests of truth, he has been constrained to deny their immature conclusions.

If he has, in the heat of argument, overstated the case, he now candidly admits that, though his friends were wrong in much that they denied, they were right in much that they affirmed. They are not, fundamentally, at cross-purposes at all, for they are one in the conviction that God is for righteousness and against evil. However much notoriously wicked people may be free from the ordinary troubles of life and swift penalties, they have no security, no permanence, judgment always hangs over them, and when they come to the end of material prosperity they are at the end of their resources. We are not to think that Job has thought this out in any philosophical way. He can no more reconcile the practical contradiction that God does and does not punish the wicked than a modern teacher who saw that all truths are made up of opposites, not in any compromise between them.² It is only another instance of Job's fidelity

¹ xxvii. 1-6.

² A guiding thought in the teaching of F. W. Robertson: *Life and Letters* (Stopford Brooke), chapter i., note.

to conscience that he could dare to make the same kind of admission. He knows how it will tell against himself, for his friends have used the same words he uses now, in describing the fate of the wicked, to prove how fitly they apply to him. He stoutly denies the personal application, whilst he is ready to admit a general truth. He is not afraid of human judgment, and confesses that the scheme of the Divine government is quite beyond him; but before he has said his last word, without recanting a word he has said before, he will join issue with the teaching of his friends that righteousness is life and that unrighteousness carries its own doom with it. It is Job's honesty of soul, surviving his profound ignorance of the meaning of God's dealings with him, that enables him to rise to a still greater spiritual height.

III.

It is easy to miss the precise connection between Job's last statement and his lyrical praise of wisdom¹ unless we realise the firm moral ground on which he is now standing. The futility of human reasoning to fathom the Divine purposes has been forced upon him by the imperfect views of his friends and his own bewilderment; but, with this confession of ignorance, he has recovered a conviction to which he owed all the peace he had once known. For, whilst the wisdom of God is unsearchable and His way past finding out, whilst the prospect of an ultimate judgment on evil does not solve the mystery of Providence, there is a practical wisdom granted to man which can sustain faith and guide him through life. This is the only moral certainty

¹ Chapter xxviii. See Appendix, Note E (2).

in a world full of mystery. You may search for gold and find it, but you will never find out the wisdom which created the world, which "made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder."

For¹ there is a mine for silver,
And a place for gold which they refine.
Iron is taken out of the earth,
And brass is molten out of the stone.

Think of the perilous life of the miner.² They drive shafts in the earth, and with a dim light penetrate its deepest recesses, with no sure foothold, "swinging to and fro," suspended by a rope, far from human sight. Just as a man ploughs the soil to win the harvest of golden grain, so the miner blasts the rock to win the harvest of gold and sapphires. The path he hews out

No bird of prey knoweth,
Neither hath the falcon's eye seen it :
The proud beasts have not trodden it,
Nor hath the fierce lion passed thereby.

Hacking his way through the hardest rock, careful to prevent the water from percolating into the workings,³ the searcher gazes at last on the precious ore which his laborious skill has unearthed. But where shall wisdom be found? Where is the place of understanding? It is priceless, beyond human discovery. When man has cut his way into the

¹ "For" (not "surely," as in A.V.). This implies some logical connection between chapters xxvii. and xxviii.

² xxviii. 1-11 is a description of mining operations. See Deut. viii. 9. There was a good deal of mining in Lebanon, in the east of Jordan, and Idumæa (Peake).

³ xxviii. 11: "He bindeth the streams from weeping" (margin). The Rev. T. S. Simon, of Doncaster, wrote to Dr. Cox: "This percolation of water into the workings of a mine is still called 'weeping' by our colliers in this neighbourhood" (*Comm. on Job*, Section VI.).

treasure-bearing rock he does not find this treasure, and even when he has extorted the wealth of the mine, it would not be of sufficient value to purchase it. "The price of wisdom is above rubies." Where, then, shall it be found?

The deep saith, It is not in me :
And the sea saith, It is not with me.
Destruction and Death say,
We have heard a rumour thereof with our ears.

It is not in nature, not disclosed by death, neither does the hoary deep, which waged primeval war with God, possess it. It is in God, and in God alone. It is the wisdom which "made a weight for the wind and meted out the waters by measure," for ever hidden from man and beyond the reach of his understanding. He cannot fathom the recesses of the Divine mind, cannot grasp the plan of creation or guess all that God meant when He laid the foundation of the earth. What, then, is man to do to meet the pressing problems of life? Is he left completely in the dark? No, for God has taught him a wisdom he can make his own possession. God has spoken to the spirit which is in man, and given him a substitute for the heavenly wisdom which shall satisfy his deepest need; for, just as the rain has its law and the flash of lightning its appointed direction, so man has a law within, a way of life in which alone he can find his goal. And unto man He said:

Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ;
And to depart from evil is understanding.

IV.

We may easily fail to understand Job at this great moment in his life. There are those who read this noble conclusion as a proof of nothing more than the indecisive character of the whole debate, the utter resourcelessness of human thought. According to this, all human thinking is futile, and the agnostic is the wisest of men. Job is the ancient sage, wearied of speculation, who says to all enquirers :

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,

For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven : wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith !¹

But this is not the mood of Job. The whole story of his struggle for light encourages thinking about God, though it conveys the warning that this must be done in a reverent spirit. The conclusion Job has reached only discourages that finality of judgment which his friends had claimed, which seemed to deny that this world is governed by a higher wisdom than our own. Job cannot accept the solution of his friends because he cannot smooth away difficulties that remain unsolved, yet he is one who has really passed through scepticism and come out on the other side into faith. The faith of a man who has pondered deeply over things is very different from that of the believer who blindly accepts a conventional form of it, and because Job has tested his convictions through the fire of afflic-

¹ *The Ancient Sage* (Tennyson).

tion, the faith he has recovered is born of loyalty to a Divine law within which is the highest form of human wisdom. It is only when we trace the steps by which he has reached this that we can realise the triumph of his tortured spirit. Job had started out with a stock of religious ideas which he had probably inherited without examining their full value. He was upright in character, "one that feared God and eschewed evil," accepting his happy position as the gift of God with no thought of making that a secondary motive for conforming to a religious life. Then he had been robbed of all he possessed—home, children, friends, companionship, health, the sense of God's favour, peace of mind. It was a shock from which he might never have recovered. But one thing he had not lost—a sincerity which would not make his judgment blind, with courage to face those spectres of the imagination which had taken the place of the vision of God. Everything seemed against him, every argument seemed plausible which discouraged hope; yet he clung to those convictions which had survived the wreck of his life because they were rooted in his experience. No frantic mood, no mad endeavour to escape from the relentless pressure of his fate could utterly destroy a past when he had communion with God as real as the pain which now racked his bones, and this upheld his spirit through all the bitterness of his experience. We have seen a soul in a moral dilemma who will not confuse moral distinctions, a man with clean hands who holds on his way against all odds, and now we see his reward. The simple faith of his early days has become spiritual understanding, the wisdom of experience. Nothing that he has lost in serenity

of mind can be compared with the gain of testing the convictions of happier days and finding them true. This is the complete vindication of Job's character from the old reproach: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" He has nothing to prove as the result of all his searching, except that man does not possess the faculties to understand God's way; he cannot substantiate his claim to an ultimate vindication of his character; and if, in a transport of inspiration, he said "I know," now he has to confess "I know not"; but, instead of renouncing a faith he could not justify, he rejects the obvious conclusion that there is no moral government in the world, and falls back on the plain, practical duties of religion "for nought" but the substance of a hope, the evidence of things not seen.

Thus ends the second stage in this story. Job is convinced by this time of the fallibility of reasoning on matters beyond human understanding, but his search for truth has not been in vain. Intellectually baffled, he can submit to his limitations with the great moral certainty in his heart that he who makes the fear of God the rule of life has attained to the highest wisdom granted to man. Job's resignation to ignorance on other matters is not a settled conclusion; he will still chafe against his lot and demand to know more; but he has found a temporary resting-place on firm moral ground, and a tired spirit will yet find peace in a clearer vision of God.

CHAPTER XIII

REMEMBERING HAPPIER THINGS

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity :
The North cannot undo them,
With a sleety whistle through them ;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbèd sense to steel it,
Was never said in rhyme.

KEATS : *Songs*.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1. And Job again took up his parable, and said,
2. Oh that I were as in the months of old,
As in the days when God watched over me ;
3. When his lamp shined upon my head,
And by his light I walked through darkness ;
4. As I was in the ripeness of my days,
When the secret of God was upon my tent ;
5. When the Almighty was yet with me,
And my children were about me ;
6. When my steps were washed with butter,
And the rock poured me out rivers of oil !
7. When I went forth to the gate unto the city,
When I prepared my seat in the street,
8. The young men saw me and hid themselves,
And the aged rose up and stood ;
9. The princes refrained talking,
And laid their hand on their mouth ;
10. The voice of the nobles was hushed,
And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.
11. For when the ear heard *me*, then it blessed me ;
And when the eye saw *me*, it gave witness unto me :
12. Because I delivered the poor that cried,
The fatherless also, that had none to help him.

13. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me :
And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
14. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me :
My justice was as a robe and a diadem.
15. I was eyes to the blind,
And feet was I to the lame.
16. I was a father to the needy :
And the cause of him that I knew not I searched out.
17. And I brake the jaws of the unrighteous,
And plucked the prey out of his teeth.
18. Then I said, I shall die in my nest,
And I shall multiply my days as the sand :
19. My root is spread out to the waters,
And the dew lieth all night upon my branch :
20. My glory is fresh in me,
And my bow is renewed in my hand.
21. Unto me men gave ear, and waited,
And kept silence for my counsel.
22. After my words they spake not again ;
And my speech dropped upon them.
23. And they waited for me as for the rain ;
And they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain.
24. If I laughed on them, they believed *it* not ;
And the light of my countenance they cast not down.
25. I chose out their way, and sat *as* chief,
And dwelt as a king in the army,
As one that comforteth the mourners.

CHAPTER XXX.

1. But now they that are younger than I have me in derision,
Whose fathers I disdained to set with the dogs of my flock.
2. Yea, the strength of their hands, whereto should it profit me ?
Men in whom ripe age is perished.
3. They are gaunt with want and famine ;
They gnaw the dry ground, in the gloom of wasteness and
desolation.
4. They pluck salt-wort by the bushes ;
And the roots of the broom *are* their meat.
5. They are driven forth from the midst *of men* ;
They cry after them as after a thief.
6. In the clefts of the valleys must they dwell,
In holes of the earth and of the rocks.
7. Among the bushes they bray ;
Under the nettles they are gathered together.
8. *They are* children of fools, yea, children of base men ;
They were scourged out of the land.
9. And now I am become their song,
Yea, I am a byword unto them.

10. They abhor me, they stand aloof from me,
And spare not to spit in my face.
11. For he hath loosed his cord, and afflicted me,
And they have cast off the bridle before me.
12. Upon my right hand rise the rabble ;
They thrust aside my feet,
And they cast up against me their ways of destruction.
13. They mar my path,
They set forward my calamity,
Even men that have no helper.
14. As through a wide breach they come :
In the midst of the ruin they roll themselves *upon me*.
15. Terrors are turned upon me,
They chase mine honour as the wind ;
And my welfare is passed away as a cloud.
16. And now my soul is poured out within me ;
Days of affliction have taken hold upon me.
17. In the night season my bones are pierced in me,
And the *pains* that gnaw me take no rest.
18. By the great force *of my disease* is my garment disfigured :
It bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.
19. He hath cast me into the mire,
And I am become like dust and ashes.
20. I cry unto thee, and thou dost not answer me :
I stand up, and thou lookest at me.
21. Thou art turned to be cruel to me:
With the might of thy hand thou persecutest me.
22. Thou liftest me up to the wind, thou causest me to ride
upon it ;
And thou dissolvest me in the storm.
23. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death,
And to the house appointed for all living.
24. Surely against a ruinous heap he will not put forth his hand ;
Though *it be* in his destruction, *one may utter* a cry because
of these things.
25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble ?
Was not my soul grieved for the needy ?
26. When I looked for good, then evil came ;
And when I waited for light, there came darkness.
27. My bowels boil and rest not ;
Days of affliction are come upon me.
28. I go mourning without the sun :
I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help.
29. I am a brother to jackals,
And a companion to ostriches.
30. My skin is black, *and falleth* from me,
And my bones are burned with heat,
31. Therefore is my harp *turned* to mourning,
And my pipe into the voice of them that weep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

1. I made a covenant with mine eyes ;
How then should I look upon a maid ?
2. For what *is* the portion of God from above,
And the heritage of the Almighty from on high ?
3. Is it not calamity to the unrighteous,
And disaster to the workers of iniquity ?
4. Doth not he see my ways,
And number all my steps ?
5. If I have walked with vanity,
And my foot hath hasted to deceit ;
6. (Let me be weighed in an even balance,
That God may know mine integrity ;)
7. If my step hath turned out of the way,
And mine heart walked after mine eyes,
And if any spot hath cleaved to mine hands :
8. Then let me sow, and let another eat ;
Yea, let the produce of my field be rooted out.
9. If mine heart have been enticed unto a woman,
And I have laid wait at my neighbour's door :
10. Then let my wife grind unto another,
And let others bow down upon her.
11. For that were an heinous crime ;
Yea, it were an iniquity to be punished by the judges :
12. For it is a fire that consumeth unto Destruction,
And would root out all mine increase.
13. If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maid-servant,
When they contended with me :
14. What then shall I do when God riseth up ?
And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him ?
15. Did not he that made me in the womb make him ?
And did not one fashion us in the womb ?
16. If I have withheld the poor from *their* desire,
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail ;
17. Or have eaten my morsel alone,
And the fatherless hath not eaten thereof ;
18. (Nay, from my youth he grew up with me as with a father,
And I have been her guide from my mother's womb ;)
19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing,
Or that the needy had no covering ;
20. If his loins have not blessed me,
And if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep ;
21. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless,
Because I saw my help in the gate :
22. Then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone.
23. For calamity from God was a terror to me,
And by reason of his excellency I could do nothing.

24. If I have made gold my hope,
And have said to the fine gold, *Thou art* my confidence ;
25. If I rejoiced because my wealth was great,
And because mine hand had gotten much ;
26. If I beheld the sun when it shined,
Or the moon walking in brightness ;
27. And my heart hath been secretly enticed,
And my mouth hath kissed my hand :
28. This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judges :
For I should have lied to God that is above.
29. If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,
Or lifted up myself when evil found him ;
30. (Yea, I suffered not my mouth to sin
By asking his life with a curse ;)
31. If the men of my tent said not,
Who can find one that hath not been satisfied with his flesh ?
32. The stranger did not lodge in the street ;
But I opened my doors to the traveller ;
33. If like Adam I covered my transgressions,
By hiding mine iniquity in my bosom ;
34. Because I feared the great multitude,
And the contempt of families terrified me,
So that I kept silence, and went not out of the door—
35. Oh that I had one to hear me !
(Lo, here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me ;)
And *that I had* the indictment which mine adversary hath
written !
36. Surely I would carry it upon my shoulder ;
I would bind it unto me as a crown.
37. I would declare unto him the number of my steps ;
As a prince would I go near unto him.
38. If my land cry out against me,
And the furrows thereof weep together ;
39. If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money,
Or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life :
40. Let thistles grow instead of wheat,
And cockle instead of barley.

The Words of Job are ended.

JOB has reached the conclusion that the plain duties of religion stand on an even higher level than knowledge, but it does not give rest to his soul. There was much in his experience akin to the miner's life—its loneliness, remote from the common life of men, the darkness in which his labour is spent.

No other voice was near to corroborate his own convictions. A great man once wrote to a friend: "It is my nature to lean not so much on the applause as on the assent of others. . . . I wish you knew the state of total impotence to which I should be reduced if there were no echo to the accents of my own voice."¹ Job heard no echo. He has learnt to do without happiness, to live on and still cling to God in the darkness; yet he is keenly aware of loneliness, and, feeling that he must turn to something, turns to the friendly past still beautiful through the medium of memory.

I.

Oh that I were as in the months of old,
As in the days when God watched over me;
When his lamp shined upon my head,
And by his light I walked through darkness.²

A poet tells us that "sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things,"³ and the happiest thing Job can remember is his fellowship with God. Loss of home, children, friends are nothing to be compared with the loss of days when he counted God as his friend—"when the Almighty was yet with me." What happy days they were! What peaceful hours he once enjoyed, how sweet was still their memory in contrast to the "aching void" in his heart which could never be filled by other things. Oh, that those days could return! The home circle, the round of activities, the esteem of all who knew him best, with the blessing of God, were like autumn

¹ W. E. Gladstone : *Life of Catherine Gladstone* (Mary Drew).

² xxix. I.

³ Dante, *Inferno*, Book V. Quoted by Tennyson in *Locksley Hall*.

days,¹ full of fruitfulness, the harvest of joy and thanksgiving!

Job's religion had been no mere round of formalities, but a practical application of his faith in deeds of justice and benevolence. We see the rich landowner who lived on his estate, going to the city, to the "gate" or market-place where business and legal matters were transacted, where youth paid him due respect and aged counsellors rose up to greet the arrival of the foremost citizen.² His presence was always welcome; for, with gravity of mind, his urbanity disarmed the fears of claimants to justice and promised encouragement to every good cause. His were not empty civic honours. Exalted among his fellow-men, he was still in touch with all classes of society—the friend of the poor, the needy, and the oppressed. Lazarus was not neglected at the gate and Dives was not spared the reckoning that was due to the oppressor. With a positive glow of satisfaction Job recalls his summary dealing with a callous offender in order to rescue the prey from his devouring jaws: "I brake the teeth of the unrighteous."³ But we are not to think of him as only exercising grave judicial functions. With a strong grasp of affairs and broad insight, he had a genial composing influence on his fellow-men, and his words dropped "like the gentle dew from heaven upon the earth beneath."⁴ Difficulties that seemed insuperable were dissolved in the light of his counsel, and, with a mind full of resource, nothing seriously clouded his habitual cheerfulness.

"I smiled on them when they had no confidence."⁵

¹ xxix. 4: "days of my youth" (lit., "days of autumn").

² xxix. 7-25.

³ xxix. 16.

⁴ xxix. 22.

⁵ xxix. 24 (margin of R.V.).

It was this reputation, added to all the prestige of an assured position, which had installed him as an uncrowned king among them. He had anticipated a long and happy life, saying to himself: "I shall die in my nest and multiply my days as the phoenix."¹ Job could not have expressed in happier language his dreams of perennial vitality. The phoenix, fabled to live five hundred years, consumed himself and his nest with fire, only to rise out of the ashes to new, vigorous life. It was a proverbial saying, but with Job it was an expression of simple faith in the favour of God which followed every stage of human life, crowning it with loving kindness and tender mercy.

II.

What a contrast now to his former greatness!

Now they that are younger than I have me in derision,
Whose fathers I disdained to set with the dogs of my flock.²

In the sad reverse of his fortune Job is mocked by the outcasts of society. He has spoken of these people before³ with the pity he always felt towards the wretched; but now he is carried away to use a phrase which has exposed him to the charge of despising them. We cannot believe that, but every word he uses to describe these people among whom he has fallen heightens the contrast between the honour formerly paid to him and the ignominy of his present position. He was once the idol of the populace—now, "none so poor to do him reverence," shrivelled forms gaunt with famine, base in mind, the rabble that formed the lowest stratum of society crawl out of their hovels to point their

¹ xxix. 18 (margin of R.V.).

² xxx. 1.

³ Chapter xxiv.

finger at the man who is a spectacle of impotent misery.

I am become their song,
Yea, I am a byword unto them.
They abhor me, they stand aloof from me,
And spare not to spit in my face.¹

The old image of a besieging host, which had expressed his sense of the heavy hand of God upon him, now fits in with his experience of human malignity: the fortress is stormed and the enemy pour in through a breach in the wall, bringing terror and dishonour in their train.²

And now we are reminded that we are listening to a man who, throughout his long, brave struggle for light, has never been free from physical pain. The strength of his soul, the peace that came to him with glimpses of light upon his way, have never alleviated his prostrating malady. He is still involved in the mystery of his own suffering, so acute that in the painful description of his helplessness we can see no resemblance to the erect figure who once walked to the gate of the city in the flush of health and strength.³ Will God never speak to him? That Presence is never far away, but nothing breaks the silence—it only seems to his disordered imagination that God, to whom he has pledged himself to be true till death, stands looking at him with an inscrutable expression.⁴ But the sufferer cannot stifle his feelings. He had wept for the sorrows of his fellow-men: why should he not express his own? He looks at himself: within, a turmoil of unrest—without, bearing all the evidences of a disfiguring disease.

¹ xxx. 9.

² xxx. 14, 15.

³ xxx. 17 onwards describe something of his physical plight.

⁴ xxx. 20: "I stand up, and thou lookest at me."

I go blackened, but not by the sun.¹

The music of his life has broken into harsh discords like the cry of jackals! What a contrast to the happy days of retrospect!

That time of year we may in him behold
When yellow leaves or few or none do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

III.

It is whilst brooding over these bitter memories that Job again rises to those moral heights which make him our teacher to-day. Before his last word is said he will clear himself, by a solemn oath, from the imputation that he has conformed to a low standard of life; and, in doing that, he will indirectly teach the world what the true standard of life is when religion is wedded to a practical morality. Job strikes the lofty note expressed by one of the purest lives in English history,²

All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

The sense of living in God's presence has regulated his life and triumphed over all that would divide his spiritual affections. As one of "the sons of the East," Job has known the subtle temptations to nature-worship, and a thousand years later Mohammed has still to say to the Arab, "Worship not the sun, neither the moon, but worship God who created them."³

Job has known the momentary impulse to salute

¹ xxx. 28 (margin of R.V.).

² Milton, Sonnet *On his having arrived at the age of Twenty-three*.

³ xxxi. 26. See Koran, chapter xxi.

the sun "when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness," touching deep chords in the child of nature; but he has resisted the spell. He has not lived a double life, assuming the appearance of piety with a heart untrue, not because he has feared the censure of his fellow-men but because he could not "lie to God that is above."¹ It is this sense of God which has both restrained him from furtive compliance with evil and inspired his religious life. The inwardness of Job's religion is most remarkable. He is at his best when he repudiates those secret sins which would not have discredited him in society but dishonoured his soul: secret satisfaction in the possession of wealth, secret idolatries, secret joy at the misfortune of his enemy. We see an elevation of soul which rises far above the imperfect morality of the imprecatory Psalms, for Job will not even indulge in the satisfaction of cursing his foe, will not rejoice at "the destruction of him that hated him."² Eliphaz the Temanite had made it one of the tests of a good man to rejoice at the calamity of the wicked,³ but Job avows his faith in a higher ideal which reveals the breadth of a magnanimous spirit. With the sense of God there has developed a deep sense of humanity which made him brother to the least of men.

Did not he that made me in the womb make him ?⁴

The sense of oneness with his fellow-men gave the rich man a notion of duty which was inseparable from his religion. He could not treat his dependents as his possessions, slaves of their master's pleasure, but as persons with the inalienable rights of children of God, who is the Father of all. He has

¹ xxxi. 28.

² xxxi. 29.

³ xxii. 19.

⁴ xxxi. 15.

been the steward of the wealth which God gave and took away. He did not eat his morsel alone or forget the fatherless, for as God had cared for him from infancy to manhood so he in return had cared for the weak.¹

If I have seen any perish for want of clothing,
Or that the needy had no covering ;
If his loins have not blessed me,
And if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep ;

Then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone.

Who had not shared in his hospitality? His doors were always open to travellers, so that it was a common thing for the members of his vast household to challenge an answer to the question, "Who is there that he has not sumptuously entertained?"² Why should he not live his life before the public eye when he had nothing to fear from its scrutiny?" We are struck by Job's conception of his duties as a religious man, because they are not legal obligations, and are not always found in a moral code; they are more than might have been expected from him, yet he felt he could do nothing less. "In discernment of the real breadth and depth of social duty nothing has gone beyond the Book of Job. . . . It is a perpetual reminder of the truth as between man and man. . . . It is a monument testifying that this was a rich man's notion of duty . . . this was his religion."³

¹ xxxi. 18. This difficult verse is translated by Peake: "For from my youth like a father he caused me to grow up, and was my guide from my mother's womb."

² xxxi. 31 (Peake).

³ Mark Rutherford.

IV.

As Job continues to assert his innocence in such searching, comprehensive details, we realise how close he is walking to the border-line of self-righteousness; but throughout this protestation he is on his defence against the direct charge his friends have made against him of living a double life. It is this which rankles in his soul, and he stoutly denies it. If he had, "after the manner of men, covered his transgressions by hiding his iniquity in his bosom,"¹ then indeed his sufferings would have been richly deserved; but he has not been guilty of the sin of hypocrisy. He has had only one idea of religion—the religion of the heart, which condemns not only the adulterous act, but the lustful look; not only unjust gain, but the love of money; not only open idolatry, but furtive compliance with it; not only retaliation on an enemy, but pleasure in his downfall. And then Job's voice breaks. His heart is too full to say more. If he has worn a mask before his fellow-men, if he has shrunk from their moral judgment, if he has done this—— But he never finishes the sentence. He can say no more. Oh that he had one to hear him! Here is his signature² to his claim of innocence—let the Almighty give him the book in which his crimes have been indicted.³ He would lift it upon his shoulder, nay, place it as a crown upon his head, and as a prince he would meet God face to face.

¹ xxxi. 33 (margin).

² xxxi. 35, his mark (Heb.).

³ The language is evidently taken from the judicial practice of the time, according to which both charge and defence were laid before the court in writing (Davidson).

The words of Job are ended. He has spoken wild words, compassed the range of human expression to describe his feelings under trial, and he ends on a lofty note indicative of an unconquered spirit. As we look back on his experience we can forgive the hasty words of impatience and rebellion, whilst we can never forget the golden phrases of faith and hope in God. We see the quality of his patience—no dumb submission to the mystery of his life, but a stubborn persistence of faith in the truth of things which survives human calumny and the Divine silence. The words of Job are ended, and we shall hear him no more until he speaks the language of adoration and praise.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ELIHU

I have lived, then, done and suffered, loved and hated, learnt and taught

This—there is no reconciling wisdom with a world distraught,
Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in the aim,
If (to my own sense remember! though none other feel the same!)—

If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's place,
And life, time—with all their chances, changes—just probation-space,

Mine, for me.

R. BROWNING : *La Saisiaz*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

1. So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was
2. righteous in his own eyes. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram : against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had
4. condemned Job. Now Elihu had waited to speak unto Job,
5. because they were elder than he. And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled.
6. And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old ; Wherefore I held back, and durst not shew you mine opinion.
7. I said, Days should speak, And multitude of years should teach wisdom.
8. But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.
9. It is not the great that are wise, Nor the aged that understand judgement.
10. Therefore I said, Hearken to me ; I also will shew mine opinion,
11. Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your reasons, Whilst ye searched out what to say.
12. Yea, I attended unto you, And, behold, there was none that convinced Job, Or that answered his words, among you.

13. Beware lest ye say, We have found wisdom ;
God may vanquish him, not man ;
14. For he hath not directed his words against me ;
Neither will I answer him with your speeches.
15. They are amazed, they answer no more ;
They have not a word to say.
16. And shall I wait, because they speak not,
Because they stand still, and answer no more ?
17. I also will answer my part,
I also will shew mine opinion.
18. For I am full of words ;
The spirit within me constraineth me.
19. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent ;
Like new bottles it is ready to burst.
20. I will speak, that I may be refreshed ;
I will open my lips and answer.
21. Let me not, I pray you, respect any man's person ;
Neither will I give flattering titles unto any man.
22. For I know not to give flattering titles ;
Else would my Maker soon take me away.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1. Howbeit, Job, I pray thee, hear my speech,
And hearken to all my words.
2. Behold now, I have opened my mouth,
My tongue hath spoken in my mouth.
3. My words *shall utter* the uprightness of my heart :
And that which my lips know they shall speak sincerely.
4. The spirit of God hath made me,
And the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.
5. If thou canst, answer thou me ;
Set *thy words* in order before me, stand forth.
6. Behold, I am toward God even as thou art :
I also am formed out of the clay.
7. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid,
Neither shall my pressure be heavy upon thee.
8. Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing,
And I have heard the voice of *thy words, saying,*
9. I am clean, without transgression ;
I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me :
10. Behold, he findeth occasions against me,
He counteth me for his enemy ;
11. He putteth my feet in the stocks,
He marketh all my paths.
12. Behold, I will answer thee, in this thou art not just ;
For God is greater than man.
13. Why dost thou strive against him ?
For he giveth not account of any of his matters.

14. For God speaketh once,
Yea twice, *though man* regardeth it not.
15. In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falleth upon men,
In slumberings upon the bed ;
16. Then he openeth the ears of men,
And sealeth their instruction,
17. That he may withdraw man *from his* purpose,
And hide pride from man ;
18. He keepeth back his soul from the pit,
And his life from perishing by the sword.
19. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,
And with continual strife in his bones :
20. So that his life abhorreth bread,
And his soul dainty meat.
21. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen ;
And his bones that were not seen stick out.
22. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the pit,
And his life to the destroyers.
23. If there be with him an angel,
An interpreter, one among a thousand,
To shew unto man what is right for him ;
24. Then he is gracious unto him, and saith,
Deliver him from going down to the pit,
I have found a ransom.
25. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's ;
He returneth to the days of his youth :
26. He prayeth unto God, and he is favourable unto him ;
So that he seeth his face with joy :
And he restoreth unto man his righteousness.
27. He singeth before men, and saith,
I have sinned, and perverted that which was right,
And it profited me not :
28. He hath redeemed my soul from going into the pit,
And my life shall behold the light.
29. Lo, all these things doth God work,
Twice, *yea* thrice, with a man,
30. To bring back his soul from the pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of the living.
31. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me :
Hold thy peace, and I will speak.
32. If thou hast anything to say, answer me :
Speak, for I desire to justify thee.
33. If not, hearken thou unto me :
Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom.

THE silence which fell upon the group after Job's impassioned appeal to God is broken by the voice

of a younger man, who has been an interested listener to the debate. Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, is not represented as one of Job's friends, but he must not be regarded as an intruder.¹ Elihu and Job were possibly of closely related stocks.² The new speaker has often wanted to intervene, but has restrained himself in the presence of older men. He has conquered his diffidence so successfully as to lay himself open to much adverse criticism; but, if we allow for peculiar mannerisms, we shall find that the somewhat inflated style with which he begins introduces us to a reverent man with a becoming sense of the gravity of his subject. Touched with deep fellow-feeling at the sight of Job's misery, he hoped to gain light upon it by listening to the conclusions of age and experience, and he is more than disappointed at the result. The three friends have no doubt said many wise things, but without proper judgment, and Job, whilst victorious in having the last word, seems immovably entrenched in self-complacency. Elihu feels that he can no longer be silent.

I.

"Now Elihu had waited to speak unto Job, because they were elder than he. And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled." It is a righteous indignation; he is indignant with Job because he could only justify himself by accusing God, and indignant with the friends because they could only justify God by accusing Job.³ These unconvincing

¹ See Appendix (Note E) on the place of Elihu in this story.

² Buz is called the brother of Uz (Gen. xxii. 21), but see another connection (Jer. xxv. 23).

³ Oehler, quoted by Godet (*Biblical Studies*).

arguments make him believe that years do not always bring wisdom, and that Divine inspiration is granted irrespective of age or rank.¹ The attitude of Elihu is not merely critical, for he has had an experience of his own, and can no longer allow the restraint imposed upon comparative youth to prevent him from making his own contribution. His lengthy introduction of himself offends Western ears; but he needs to convince his listeners that he has something to say before they will be disposed to give him a patient hearing, for they do not expect any new light on the problem, and are slow to believe that a younger generation can have anything to teach them. We must not expect too much from Elihu, for he has been educated in the same school as his seniors, does not know the root of Job's trouble or guess the value of his spiritual discoveries; but in spite of these limitations, he is a bright scholar, less fettered by the dogmas of tradition than his teachers. He has discovered some of "the sweet uses of adversity," and wants to put a precious jewel of experience in a proper setting. This has made him something of a prophet, and, if we are not rebuffed by his self-confident manner, we shall find that he gives a human touch to the whole situation—just what was needed to soothe a wounded heart. He has caught the accent of fear in Job's voice, heard him pray that God would divest Himself of the terror of His majesty, and so speak to him that he shall feel not crushed but convinced. Unaware that Job's later experience has largely banished this fear, Elihu is deeply moved by it, and, solemnly believing that he is speaking as God's messenger, desires to respond to Job's appeal

¹ xxxii. 8, 9.

for some common ground on which to view the whole subject. It is too much to say that he actually believes that he is speaking "in God's stead,"¹ and can explain all that Job wants to know; but the sympathetic note is unmistakable, and, for the first time, Job hears the tone of authority blend with a sweet reasonableness.

Behold, I am toward God even as thou art :
I also am formed out of the clay.
Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid,
Neither shall my pressure be heavy upon thee.²

II.

At first, we can hardly distinguish the voice of Elihu from the measured language of the friends. He has heard Job declare his innocence in such a way as to impugn God's character, and he must clear his mind, once and for all, from this moral delusion :

Behold, I will answer thee, in this thou art not just ;
For God is greater than man.
Why dost thou strive against him ?
For he giveth not account of any of his matters.³

Were the old truths of the Divine majesty again to be dinned into his ears, only to increase the sense of distance between heaven and earth, the Divine serenity and human misery? If so, Job will have his answer ready for another "miserable comforter," more interested in theology than its application to a baffling problem. And then there falls upon the ears of the distracted man a new accent of concern for him, which assures him that he is in the presence of one who can not only put himself in another

¹ xxxiii. 6: "I am, according to thy wish, in God's stead" (margin).

² xxxiii. 6, 7.

³ xxxiii. 12.

man's place but minister to his distress. Elihu does this in the most effective way by showing that the character of God makes it impossible for Him to be unfeeling and arbitrary in His dealings with man—

For God speaketh once,
Yea twice, though man regardeth it not.¹

Despotism speaks only once—a word, and a blow if the word is not obeyed. God speaks twice, and the second word reveals a gracious intention. One of the Psalmists heard this second word, which is not a repetition, but a fuller revelation: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee . . . belongeth mercy."² Job is to think of God as moved by the necessity of His nature to speak to man in many ways long before man thinks of speaking to Him. He speaks in a dream, a vision of the night, as He spoke to Eliphaz the Temanite when he lay in the grip of a nameless terror; but the Divine revelation is not designed only to give man a shuddering sense of His reality. There is a gracious purpose behind it. It is the voice of One who whispers in the ear a precious secret.³ It is the method of a teacher seeking to train the heart, to anticipate mistakes and prevent them before they need correction.

Then he openeth the ears of men,
And sealeth their instruction,
That he may withdraw man from his purpose,
And hide pride from man.⁴

The patience of the Teacher has no limits. If these gentle influences fail, the Divine purpose is not to be thwarted, and a man disobedient to a heavenly vision may feel a chastening hand upon him. Toss-

¹ xxxiii. 14.

² Ps. lxii. 11.

³ Compare I Sam. ix. 15; Ps. xl. 6.

⁴ xxxiii. 16, 17.

ing on a sick-bed, racked with pain, with death staring him in the face, he may seem bereft of hope; and, yet, all the time he is the object of the divinest concern, for when "his soul draweth near unto the pit and his life to the destroyers"¹ a ministering angel intervenes, "one of the thousand,"² told off for the special service of comfort, healing, and restoration. Finding the sufferer amenable to discipline, this angel is the messenger of pardon and peace, the restorer of lost things—health, character, the joy of life—proving that the Divine dealings are designed not to humiliate, but purify and exalt human life. The voice of the restored man is heard singing praises to God for a providential purpose which has so overruled events as to make all things work together for good.

Lo, all these things doth God work,
Twice, yea thrice, with a man,
To bring back his soul from the pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of the living.³

III.

Such is the comforting message of Elihu. Let Job dismiss from his mind, for ever, the thought of God as an arbitrary Sovereign, an unfeeling Judge! Let him never think of his sorrows as a mark of the Divine indifference, for God is gracious, and all His modes of revelation—the whispered secret, the touch of pain, the angelic ministries—speak of a Divine resourcefulness expended in the service of man. As these consoling words fell upon the stricken heart of Job he might have wondered: is this indeed a

¹ xxxiii. 22. The destroyers=angels of death.

² xxxiii. 23. One of the thousand sons of God who serve Him (not an exceptional person, as in Eccles. vii. 28).

³ xxxiii. 29, 30.

messenger from God, an angel in disguise, one of a thousand sent to minister to human need? In coming down to his level, in raising his thoughts to One who speaks to man with the accent of love, in regarding suffering as a means of drawing man closer to God, in teaching that there are no limits to the Divine patience and that "the end of the Lord is very pitiful," Elihu has done more to meet Job's necessity than all the proverbial wisdom stored in the minds of Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite. Their cold theology could never touch the heart, never reassure a lonely man that he was not forsaken. "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me," wrote one in later days;¹ and this had been the most poignant of Job's reflections. It seemed as though God would not speak, and now he learns that God speaks to man in every language of the heart. Revelation comes not to a privileged few, but to any sleepless man, conveying the message that pain is a messenger of love as well as judgment; and the infinite spaces, far from being wrapped in eternal silence, are crowded with angelic ministries.

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
Turn but a stone and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.²

¹ Pascal, *Thoughts*, 206.

² *In no Strange Land*, Francis Thompson.

Was it so? Must he never think of God as far away from him—never think of himself as a man with an abnormal experience, but one with his fellow-men in a school of suffering? Did this message scatter shadows, awaken new hope in Job! We do not know. Eliphaz the Temanite said,¹ “Happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty”; but the words had sounded like hollow rhetoric from one who assumed that the sole cause of Job’s trouble lay in his past life. Elihu does not make this assumption. He regards him as a sinner under correction, and perhaps thinks that his sufferings were designed, in the first place, to bring to consciousness some latent fault, but he is not concerned with Job’s history previous to his trial, and only judges him by what he has seen and heard for himself. Job has sinned by his words, by the wrong attitude he has taken up towards God’s dealings with him, by casting reflections on His character and rebelling against His providence.² All this Job tacitly admits, for he makes no reply to Elihu’s demand for an answer, even though it is accompanied by the promise to give him the benefit of any doubt.

If thou hast anything to say, answer me :
Speak, for I desire to justify thee.³

But what can he say? He has never claimed to be sinless, and his sufferings *have* brought to light a lurking spirit of presumption. Had he not himself once said,⁴ “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”? Might not suffering be not only the

¹ v. 17.

² The view that Elihu only charges Job with his rebellious speeches (not with sin in his past life) is strongly maintained by Budde and Cornill.

³ xxxiii. 32.

⁴ xxiii. 10.

touchstone which tests the quality of the gold but also the discipline which smelts out the dross? Even this view of his case left much of his problem unsolved, but it would relieve some of the tension in his mind, and open out prospects of recovery to one who had despaired of life. It will need a clearer vision of God to bring Job into his right spirit, but Elihu plays a noble part in contributing to that end by the touch of genuine sympathy he brings into the debate and the new light he throws on the whole problem of sorrow.

IV.

The story of Job would be much poorer without the contribution of Elihu, and we may recognise all his defects without withholding our appreciation of his service. Quite ignorant of the original cause of Job's trial, with no more capacity to fathom the recesses of the Divine wisdom than Job himself, he largely ignores any element of mystery in human experience, and does not guess the limits of his own inspiration. It may be that Elihu thinks that he is saying the last word that can be said on the subject, that his timely intervention removes any necessity for a more convincing Divine revelation. Admitting all these defects, we cannot dispute his authority to speak as the messenger of God or deny the value of his teaching. He brings a welcome note into a tragic story by assuring Job that he is not at the mercy of hard dogmas and pitiless logic, but always in the hands of a wise, merciful Creator, and so, unconsciously, prepares him for a fuller manifestation of the Divine presence. Elihu furnishes the only key to Job's problem which he is to receive,

and there are those who have thought that it solves the mystery of the Divine dealings with him. If suffering is an educative instrument in God's hands which leads man to self-knowledge, the upright man we saw in the Prologue may have had some sin slumbering in his heart which he could only realise under trial. Job's speeches bring to light the sin of spiritual pride, and it was the function of Elihu both to reveal this fault in his character and explain his experience in the light of it. "God has thrown open to us the heart of a man most just and holy and apparently perfect in all things possible to human nature, except humility. For this he is tried . . . and the temptation accomplishes in Job that for which it was sent."¹ This is an interesting suggestion, but it credits Elihu with more wisdom than he possessed. There is no evidence that it was the original Divine intention to bring to light hidden things in Job's heart, and there is nothing to explain why such unparalleled sufferings should have been required to do it. We have reason to believe that Elihu was unconcerned with Job's former history, and it was not the voice of human wisdom, but the answer out of the storm which taught Job the lesson of his life. The mystery of the Divine purpose is not to be revealed, but it fell to Elihu, as the representative of a new school of enquiry, to teach a theory of the Divine government which has stood the test of time: life is not an adventure but a discipline, and pain, overruled by almighty wisdom and love, becomes a means of education for the perfecting of the human spirit.

God is the incomparable Teacher,² not despising

¹ Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, and the view of Budde and Cornill.

² xxxvi. 22.

the dullest scholar¹ who repeats the lesson "once, twice, yea thrice," condescending to man's deepest need and never doubting his capacity to learn. This relationship suggests the close affinity of man with God, and throws new light on the slow processes of Providence conditioned by human limitations. The thought is not developed by Elihu, and his teaching is not always consistent with it; but it cast new light on the meaning of human existence, and Bishop Butler only carried the argument a step farther when he said that it was reasonable to regard the present life as a disciplinary preparation for a future one.² Elihu will say many other wise things, but this is his main contribution, and, when we consider its permanent value, it justifies the verdict that "in the whole range of Holy Writ there are few passages which in profundity of thought and loftiness of feeling can compare with his speeches."³

¹ xxxvi. 5.

² *Analogy of Religion*, Part I.

³ Cornill, *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

CHAPTER XV

THE PRELUDE TO THE STORM

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1. Moreover Elihu answered and said,
2. Hear my words, ye wise men ;
And give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.
3. For the ear trieth words,
As the palate tasteth meat.
4. Let us choose for us that which is right ;
Let us know among ourselves what is good.
5. For Job hath said, I am righteous,
And God hath taken away my right.
6. Notwithstanding my right I am *accounted* a liar ;
My wound is incurable, *though I am* without transgression.
7. What man is like Job,
Who drinketh up scorning like water ?
8. Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity,
And walketh with wicked men.
9. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing
That he should delight himself with God.
10. Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding :
Far be it from God that he should do wickedness ;
And from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity.
11. For the work of a man shall he render unto him,
And cause every man to find according to his ways.
12. Yea, of a surety, God will not do wickedly,
Neither will the Almighty pervert judgement.
13. Who gave him a charge over the earth ?
Or who hath disposed the whole world ?
14. If he set his heart upon man,
If he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath ;
15. All flesh shall perish together,
And man shall turn again unto dust.
16. If now *thou hast* understanding, hear this :
Hearken to the voice of my words.
17. Shall even one that hateth right govern ?
And wilt thou condemn him that is just *and* mighty ?
18. Is it *fit* to say to a king, *Thou art* vile ?
Or to nobles, *Ye are* wicked ?

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19. *How much less* to him that respecteth not the persons of princes,
Nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?
For they all are the work of his hands.
20. In a moment they die, even at midnight;
The people are shaken and pass away,
And the mighty are taken away without hand.
21. For his eyes are upon the ways of a man,
And he seeth all his goings.
22. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death,
Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.
23. For he needeth not further to consider a man,
That he should go before God in judgement.
24. He breaketh in pieces mighty men *in ways* past finding out,
And setteth others in their stead.
25. Therefore he taketh knowledge of their works;
And he overturneth them in the night, so that they are
destroyed.
26. He striketh them as wicked men
In the open sight of others;
27. Because they turned aside from following him,
And would not have regard to any of his ways:
28. So that they caused the cry of the poor to come unto him,
And he heard the cry of the afflicted.
29. When he giveth quietness, who then can condemn?
And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?
Whether *it be done* unto a nation, or unto a man, alike:
30. That the godless man reign not,
That there be none to ensnare the people.
31. For hath any said unto God,
I have borne *chastisement*, I will not offend *any more* :
32. That which I see not teach thou me;
If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more?
33. Shall his recompence be as thou wilt, that thou refusest it?
For thou must choose, and not I:
Therefore speak what thou knowest.
34. Men of understanding will say unto me,
Yea, every wise man that heareth me:
35. Job speaketh without knowledge,
And his words are without wisdom.
36. Would that Job were tried unto the end,
Because of his answering like wicked men.
37. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin,
He clappeth his hands among us,
And multiplieth his words against God.

CHAPTER XXXV.

1. Moreover Elihu answered and said,
2. Thinkest thou this to be *thy* right,
Or sayest thou, My righteousness is more than God's,

3. That thou sayest, What advantage will it be unto thee ?
And, What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned ?
4. I will answer thee,
And thy companions with thee.
5. Look unto the heavens, and see ;
And behold the skies, which are higher than thou.
6. If thou hast sinned, what doest thou against him ?
And if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou
unto him ?
7. If thou be righteous, what givest thou him ?
Or what receiveth he of thine hand ?
8. Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou art ;
And thy righteousness *may profit* a son of man.
9. By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out ;
They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty.
10. But none saith, Where is God my Maker,
Who giveth songs in the night ;
11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth,
And maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven ?
12. There they cry, but none giveth answer,
Because of the pride of evil men.
13. Surely God will not hear vanity,
Neither will the Almighty regard it.
14. How much less when thou sayest thou beholdest him not,
The cause is before him, and thou waitest for him !
15. But now, because he hath not visited in his anger,
Neither doth he greatly regard arrogance ;
16. Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vanity ;
He multiplieth words without knowledge.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

1. Elihu also proceeded, and said,
2. Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee ;
For I have yet somewhat to say on God's behalf.
3. I will fetch my knowledge from afar,
And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
4. For truly my words are not false :
One that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.
5. Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any :
He is mighty in strength of understanding.
6. He preserveth not the life of the wicked :
But giveth to the afflicted *their* right.
7. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous :
But with kings upon the throne
He setteth them for ever, and they are exalted.
8. And if they be bound in fetters,
And be taken in the cords of affliction ;

9. Then he sheweth them their work,
And their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves
proudly.
10. He openeth also their ear to instruction,
And commandeth that they return from iniquity.
11. If they hearken and serve *him*,
They shall spend their days in prosperity,
And their years in pleasures.
12. But if they hearken not, they shall perish by the sword,
And they shall die without knowledge.
13. But they that are godless in heart lay up anger :
They cry not for help when he bindeth them.
14. They die in youth,
And their life *perisheth* among the unclean.
15. He delivereth the afflicted by his affliction,
And openeth their ear in oppression.
16. Yea, he would have led thee away out of distress
Into a broad place, where there is no straitness ;
And that which is set on thy table should be full of fatness.
17. But thou art full of the judgement of the wicked :
Judgement and justice take hold *on thee*.
18. Because there is wrath, beware lest thou be led away by *thy*
sufficiency ;
Neither let the greatness of the ransom turn thee aside.
19. Will thy riches suffice, *that thou be* not in distress,
Or all the forces of *thy* strength ?
20. Desire not the night,
When peoples are cut off in their place.
21. Take heed, regard not iniquity :
For this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.
22. Behold, God doeth loftily in his power :
Who is a teacher like unto him ?
23. Who hath enjoined him his way ?
Or who can say, Thou hast wrought unrighteousness ?
24. Remember that thou magnify his work,
Whereof men have sung.
25. All men have looked thereon ;
Man beholdeth it afar off.
26. Behold, God is great, and we know him not ;
The number of his years is unsearchable.
27. For he draweth up the drops of water,
Which distil in rain from his vapour :
28. Which the skies pour down
And drop upon man abundantly.
29. Yea, can any understand the spreadings of the clouds,
The thunderings of his pavilion ?
30. Behold, he spreadeth his light around him ;
And he covereth the bottom of the sea.
31. For by these he judgeth the peoples ;
He giveth meat in abundance.

32. He covereth his hands with the lightning ;
And giveth it a charge that it strike the mark.
33. The noise thereof telleth concerning him,
The cattle also concerning *the storm* that cometh up.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

1. At this also my heart trembleth,
And is moved out of its place.
2. Hearken ye unto the noise of his voice,
And the sound that goeth out of his mouth.
3. He sendeth it forth under the whole heaven,
And his lightning unto the ends of the earth.
4. After it a voice roareth ;
He thundereth with the voice of his majesty :
And he stayeth them not when his voice is heard.
5. God thundereth marvellously with his voice ;
Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.
6. For he saith to the snow, Fall thou on the earth ;
Likewise to the shower of rain,
And to the showers of his mighty rain.
7. He sealeth up the hand of every man ;
That all men whom he hath made may know *it*.
8. Then the beasts go into coverts,
And remain in their dens.
9. Out of the chamber *of the south* cometh the storm :
And cold out of the north.
10. By the breath of God ice is given :
And the breadth of the waters is straitened.
11. Yea, he ladeth the thick cloud with moisture ;
He spreadeth abroad the cloud of his lightning :
12. And it is turned round about by his guidance,
That they may do whatsoever he commandeth them
Upon the face of the habitable world :
13. Whether it be for correction, or for his land,
Or for mercy, that he cause it to come.
14. Hearken unto this, O Job :
Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.
15. Dost thou know how God layeth *his charge* upon them,
And causeth the lightning of his cloud to shine ?
16. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds,
The wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge ?
17. How thy garments are warm,
When the earth is still by reason of the south *wind* ?
18. Canst thou with him spread out the sky,
Which is strong as a molten mirror ?
19. Teach us what we shall say unto him ;
For we cannot order *our speech* by reason of darkness.
20. Shall it be told him that I would speak ?
Or should a man wish that he were swallowed up ?

21. And now men see not the light which is bright in the skies :
But the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.
22. Out of the north cometh golden splendour :
God hath upon him terrible majesty.
23. *Touching* the Almighty, we cannot find him out ; he is
excellent in power :
And in judgement and plenteous justice he will not afflict.
24. Men do therefore fear him :
He regardeth not any that are wise of heart.

ELIHU shows every disposition to be fair to Job, and speak to him on equal terms. He is actuated by a strict sense of duty and his words are not always palatable, but he has no desire to triumph over a fallen man ; and though he cannot justify Job's attitude in questioning God's dealings with him, he hopes that Job will so reply to his appeal as to put himself in the right. But, whatever Job feels, he does not speak. Nothing less than a Divine voice will open his mouth again. So Elihu proceeds in a sterner strain, appealing to Job indirectly, through any of the bystanders who care to listen.

I.

In the first speech Elihu has replied to Job's charges against a silent God, by claiming that God has spoken and does ever speak to man in ways he can understand. He is now concerned with graver charges. Job had impugned the Divine justice, and we hear the old question repeated with new emphasis : Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?¹ Job once said, " Doth not the ear try words, even as the palate tasteth meat ?"² Let that be the test for an appeal to the common reason to reverent and just thoughts of God. Job has spoken as though he had been called before the bar of God to plead guilty when he knew that he was innocent—as though

¹ This is the question which is answered in chapter xxxiv.

² xii. 11.

he were simply the butt of a Divine malignity—he has gone the length of saying that it was no advantage to a man to be religious, and in expressing these wild opinions he has, to all intents and purposes, gone over to the camp of scepticism and impiety. Even if Job had not said these things in so many words, it was the drift of much of the hasty language which had escaped him, and Elihu feels that he must repudiate these charges without sparing the man who has made them. First of all Job must learn, all over again, that injustice is inconsistent with the idea of God.¹ This is just what the three friends had repeatedly said, and the statement is unanswerable; but the question Job asked was, How do you reconcile this with the anomalies of life? Elihu is not content to repeat platitudes and seeks to strengthen his assertions by an appeal to reason. We are not to think of God in a limited way.

Who gave him a charge over the earth?

Or who hath laid (upon him) the whole world?²

We are not to apply to God human analogies as if He were a viceroy governing a province for self-enrichment, regardless of right; for the king of the whole earth is above temptation, responsible only to Himself. This in itself does not tell us anything about the character of God (for an autocrat may be a law to himself and yet act unjustly); but when we think of His marvellous providence we know that the Creator and Sustainer of life cannot be capricious and unjust. Elihu seems to have said:

If he cause his spirit to return to him,
And gather his breath to himself,
All flesh shall perish together,
And man shall turn again into dust.³

¹ xxxiv. 10.

² xxxiv. 13 (see margin).

³ xxxiv. 14 (see margin and Peake's comment).

This has been called one of the most beautiful thoughts in the Bible.¹ The Oriental thinker was not a pessimist, and existence at its worst was not to be regarded as an evil but a good. God gives and perpetuates the boon of life, and this very persistence of life is a proof of His goodness, for if He considered only Himself He might, at any time, withdraw the gift of His spirit, and then life would droop and die. But He who is above all is through all and in us all, creating, sustaining, and inspiring life in all the myriad forms which express the manifold endowments of His spirit; from which faith concludes that He will not ultimately forsake the work of His hands.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :
 Thou madest man, he knows not why,
 He thinks he was not made to die ;
 And thou hast made him : thou art just.²

Elihu makes a pause.³ Do his hearers grasp these elementary truths? In all government it is justice which guarantees stability—how much more so in the Divine government?

Elihu exposes himself to criticism when he goes on to say that government, human or Divine, must be right, because it is not fit to say to a king, "Thou art vile."⁴ He seems to infer that the "powers that be" are always ordained of God. To say that God governs and that therefore His rule is righteous does not prove anything to one who has doubts about the moral government of the world. Authority and injustice may flourish together, as history proves; and though it is true that in the long run empires built on force and wrong fall, it needs a bold act of faith to believe that they will. It is only

¹ By Budde. ² *In Memoriam*. ³ xxxiv. 16. ⁴ xxxiv. 18.

stubborn faith in a moral order that could make a Boadicea, bleeding under Roman rods, predict

Rome shall perish—write that word
In the blood that she has spilt.¹

But we must not criticise Elihu as though he were a cool logician. With him the faith is an axiom (as it was with Bishop Butler) that to think of God as unjust is, to conscience, a contradiction in terms. Elihu is not concerned with details but principles and, moving in a pure region of thought, the doubts of other minds are beyond his comprehension. The Divine impartiality is self-evident: He respecteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.² Job has expressed a desire for the Divine assizes,³ where he could plead his cause and obtain a verdict, but, since nothing escapes the Divine omniscience, there is no need for such sessions.

For he needeth not further to consider a man,
That he should go before God in judgement.

When he giveth quietness, who then can condemn?
And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?⁴

Judgment and mercy overtake all men without fail, and all the Divine operations are directed to one end, "that the godless man reign not."⁵

Elihu has addressed himself to a circle of hearers, but Job has been the text from which he has been preaching. We are not to think (as some do) that he adopts the attitude of the three friends, charging Job himself as the cause of all his trouble; but, none the less, he regards the whole spirit of Job since he was laid low as most unworthy of a creature to-

¹ *Boadicea* (Cowper).

⁴ xxxiv. 23, 29.

² xxiv. 19.

⁵ xxxiv. 30.

³ See xxiv. 1.

wards his Creator. Think of a man criticising the Divine providence as though there were no moral reason in it!¹ Think of a man daring to choose the method of God's dealing with him!² All thoughtful, unprejudiced persons must agree that Job has spoken without knowledge or wisdom, and their decision would undoubtedly be :

Would that Job were tried unto the end,
Because of his answering like wicked men.
For he addeth rebellion unto his sin,
He clappeth his hands among us,
And multiplieth his words against God.³

II.

We miss the wooing note in Elihu's voice, but we shall hear it again. Meanwhile he still feels that he has a stern duty to perform—for Job has made another great mistake in suggesting that there is no advantage in being a religious man.⁴

It is the thought which one of the Psalmists tried to keep to himself. "Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency."⁵ But, we ask, has Job said this? He has quoted it as a saying, but repudiated it in the same breath.⁶ He has long ago vindicated himself from the old charge, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" No doubt the false theology of his friends has driven him to speak as though it made no difference in his circumstances whether a man is good or bad, but his

¹ xxxiv. 31: "I have borne (chastisement) though I offend not" (margin).

² xxxiv. 33. Some read this verse: "For thou must choose, and not God." (You, forsooth, and not God must choose!)

³ xxxiv. 36, 37.

⁴ xxxv. 3.

⁵ Ps. lxxiii. 13.

⁶ See xxi. 15, 16.

innermost conviction is that goodness is eternally, unconditionally good whatever a man may suffer. He scorns the commercial dictum, "Religion does not pay." Elihu does not credit him with this.

Look unto the heavens, and see ;
And behold the skies, which are higher than thou.
If thou hast sinned, what doest thou against him ?

If thou be righteous, what givest thou him ?¹

Is there, then, an impassable gulf between God and man ? Is there no room left in human life for prayer and devotion, for all that unites earth to heaven ? Yes, there is, and no one knows it better than Elihu ; but he is bent on teaching Job reverent thoughts of God, and he will do it even at the risk of only teaching half-truths about Him. Job must grasp the fact that the cause of all the anomalies of life is in man, not God. God remains eternally the same, and treats men strictly according to their deserts.² Elihu exalts God's greatness at the expense of His feeling, and no doubt this would sound to Job very much like the abstract teaching he had heard before from his friends ; but now he is in better hands, and we see the difference between the cold dignity of an Eliphaz and a teacher who cannot conceal the heart. Elihu is no more consistent in his theology than the former, but he will yet show how near God can come to man by entering into his experience. When we cry to God in distress and receive no answer there is a reason for it: it is not because God does not hear, but because we ask amiss. Too often the cry to Heaven is merely the instinctive cry of suffering—a scream of pain like that of the lower animals—instead of being an appeal of the soul.

¹ xxxv. 5-7.

² xxxv. 8. This seems to be the meaning of this difficult verse.

By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out ;
 They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty.
 But none saith, Where is God my Maker,
 Who giveth songs in the night ;
 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth,
 And maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?¹

Suffering can lay hold upon God, but it often does nothing but cry, "Take it away"; and this is to be "as the horse or the mule which have no understanding." There is a rudimentary wisdom in the animal world well worth studying;² but God has surely made man wiser than all the rest of His creation, for He has given him the capacity to think, to say, "Where is God my Maker? What is He teaching me in this experience?" The beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven are sensitive to pain, and God careth for them; yet creatures of a day, looking neither before nor after, perceive no meaning in their pangs; but to man is given the capacity to pray for light, for the spirit that can profit by discipline and turn the severest trial to good account.

These are words of wisdom and sympathy; but they show how little Elihu understood Job. Surely he had met his trials in the spirit of an enquirer far more than one who only prayed to be released from them, and, without suppressing the natural exclamations of a sufferer, the soul had triumphed over the body. He has still much to learn, cannot understand the delays of God, the mystery of His providence;³ but he is seeking for light, and his spiritual experience has already confirmed Elihu's conception of the incomparable Teacher who, "so far from forsaking or

¹ xxxv. 9-11.

² xii. 7.

³ This seems to be the meaning of xxxv. 13-16 (see margin and Driver's comment).

forgetting His servants in the darkness of affliction, gives them songs in the night reminiscent of past happiness and prophetic of future joy."¹

III.

Elihu has still something to say on God's behalf, and he will say it persuasively, drawing from a rich vocabulary, rising to an eloquence not surpassed in this story. He has sought to correct some of Job's false ideas of God, and now he proceeds to represent his own elevated conceptions of the Creator.

Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee ;
For I have yet somewhat to say on God's behalf.
I will fetch my knowledge from afar,
And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.²

These impressive words arouse expectation, and those who give Elihu a patient hearing to the end will not be disappointed. He begins on familiar ground. His main desire is that Job shall not miss the disciplinary effect of suffering, and he will press that home before he allows full play to his rhetorical power.

God is great, but none of His creatures are beneath His notice ; for He despises no man,³ and, with a perfect understanding of all conditions of life, adapts His providence to strong and weak, the evil and the good. There is a beneficent purpose in all His chastisement.

"He openeth also their ear to instruction."⁴ Elihu does not think that suffering has some virtue in itself to make bad men good, and good men better,

¹ Strahn.

² xxxvi. 2, 3. "My knowledge from afar" means "I will deal with the subject comprehensively."

³ xxxvi. 5.

⁴ xxxvi. 10.

for which there is no sanction in revelation or experience. Pain only fulfils its purpose when we recognise Divine wisdom and love behind it. Contrast the effect of pain on two people—a righteous and a godless man, both in the same plight, “bound in fetters, taken in the cords of affliction.”¹ For the teachable soul God has a wonderful deliverance, but for the man whose mind and heart are closed against Him the period of suffering hardens the soul in unbelief.

Whilst Elihu is saying these wise words he cannot conceal his doubt of Job. If he does not accuse him as the friends have done as the sole cause of all his trouble, he does not think he is accepting discipline in the right spirit, for he grudges the price he has to pay for it.² Elihu seems unduly severe in his judgment, with little conception of Job’s spiritual attainments; but this severity is toned down by his disclosure of a Divine tenderness, alluring the sufferer by every art to a higher life.

Yea, he allureth thee out of distress
Into a broad place where there is no straitness.³

Who is a teacher like unto Him?⁴ This is the theme which kindles the imagination of the speaker till he is completely absorbed in the contemplation of the Divine power and wisdom manifested in the marvels of nature and the government of the world.

IV.

Elihu desires to give Job the best of all reasons why there is no Teacher like God: it is because no

¹ xxxvi. 8-16.

² xxxvi. 18: “Neither let the greatness of the ransom turn thee aside.” (The ransom is the price of suffering.)

³ xxxvi. 16 (Peake’s translation). ⁴ xxxvi. 22.

one can teach Him.¹ In the rhetorical manner of one of the greatest of the prophets he asks: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him the path of judgement, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?"² Let Job regard the splendour, the dormant power, the mystery of the clouds.

For he draweth up the drops of water,
Which distil in rain from his vapour :
Which the skies pour down
And drop upon man abundantly.
Yea, can any understand the spreadings of the clouds,
The thunderings of his pavilion ?³

"It is done almost entirely by the great Angel of the sea—rain. We habitually think of the rain-cloud as dark and grey; not knowing that we owe to it perhaps the fairest though not the most dazzling of the hues of heaven. . . . No clouds form such skies, none are so tender, various, inimitable . . . for these are the robes of love of the Angel of the sea. To these that name is chiefly given, the 'spreadings of the clouds' from their extent, their gentleness, their fulness of rain."⁴

But the Angel of the sea has another message: ". . . Those war-clouds that gather on the horizon dragon-crested, tongued with fire;—how is their barbed strength bridled? What bits are these they are champing with their vaporous lips; flinging off flakes of black foam! Leagued leviathans of the Sea of Heaven, out of their nostrils goeth smoke and their eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. . . . Where ride the captains of their armies? Where

¹ xxxvi. 22-25.

² Isa. xl. 13, 14.

³ xxxvi. 27-29.

⁴ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. v., part vii., "Of Cloud Beauty."

are set the measures of their march?"¹ If we speak of the gentleness and terror of the clouds, what shall we say of their mystery?

Hearken unto this, O Job :

Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.

Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds,

The wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?²

Dost thou know how the clouds are poised free in the sky, laden with moisture yet floating without support?

"... The vapour thrusts itself across the gates of heaven in likeness of a brazen bar; or braids itself in and out and across and across like a tissue of tapestry; or falls into ripples like sand; or into waving shreds and tongues as fire. On what anvils and wheels is the vapour pointed, twisted, hammered, whirled as the potter's clay? By what hands is the incense of the sea built up into domes of marble?"³ Whilst Elihu speaks, the clouds are gathering, a storm darkens the heavens and sweeps across the landscape, the thunder reverberates, drowning human voices, and from the north⁴ appears a golden splendour streaming across the darkness of the world.

The skies sent out a sound :

Thine arrows also went abroad.

The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind ;

The lightnings lightened the world :

The earth trembled and shook.⁵

What is man in nature, in comparison with the Infinite? What are human concerns to Him who guides the constellations—who binds the cluster of the Pleiades and looses the bands of Orion? Clouds

¹ *Loc. cit.*

² xxxvii. 14, 16.

³ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*.

⁴ xxxvii. 22. The north was regarded as the throne of God (Isa. xiv. 13).

⁵ Ps. lxxvii. 17, 18.

and darkness are round about Him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. "And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind : and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire : and after the fire a still small voice."¹

¹ I Kings xix. 11.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ANSWER OUT OF THE STORM

And all is well, though faith and form
Be sunder'd in the night of fear ;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm.

In Memoriam, cxxvii.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

1. Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
2. Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge ?
3. Gird up now thy loins like a man ;
For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
5. Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest ?
Or who stretched the line upon it ?
6. Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened ?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof ;
7. When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy ?
8. Or *who* shut up the sea with doors,
When it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the womb ;
9. When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
And thick darkness a swaddling band for it,
10. And prescribed for it my decree,
And set bars and doors,
11. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ;
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed ?
12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days *began*,
And caused the dayspring to know its place ;
13. That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,
And the wicked be shaken out of it ?
14. It is changed as clay under the seal ;
And *all things* stand forth as a garment :
15. And from the wicked their light is withholden,
And the high arm is broken.
16. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea ?
Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep ?

17. Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee?
Or hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death?
18. Hast thou comprehended the breadth of the earth?
Declare, if thou knowest it all.
19. Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
And as for darkness, where is the place thereof ;
20. That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof,
And that thou shouldest discern the paths to the house
thereof?
21. *Doubtless*, thou knowest, for thou wast then born,
And the number of thy days is great !
22. Hast thou entered the treasures of the snow,
Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,
23. Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,
Against the day of battle and war ?
24. By what way is the light parted,
Or the east wind scattered upon the earth ?
25. Who hath cleft a channel for the waterflood,
Or a way for the lightning of the thunder ;
26. To cause it to rain on a land where no man is ;
On the wilderness, wherein there is no man ;
27. To satisfy the waste and desolate *ground* ;
And to cause the tender grass to spring forth ?
28. Hath the rain a father ?
Or who hath begotten the drops of dew ?
29. Out of whose womb came the ice ?
And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it ?
30. The waters are hidden as *with* stone,
And the face of the deep is frozen.
31. Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
Or loose the bands of Orion ?
32. Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season ?
Or canst thou guide the Bear with her train ?
33. Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens ?
Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth ?
34. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,
That abundance of waters may cover thee ?
35. Canst thou send forth lightnings, that they may go,
And say unto thee, Here we are ?
36. Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts ?
Or who hath given understanding to the mind ?
37. Who can number the clouds by wisdom ?
Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven,
38. When the dust runneth into a mass,
And the clods cleave fast together ?
39. Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lioness ?
Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
40. When they couch in their dens,
And abide in the covert to lie in wait ?

41. Who provideth for the raven his food,
When his young ones cry unto God,
And wander for lack of meat?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

1. Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?
Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?
2. Canst thou number the months that they fulfil?
Or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?
3. They bow themselves, they bring forth their young,
They cast out their sorrows.
4. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up in the open field;
They go forth, and return not again.
5. Who hath sent out the wild ass free?
Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?
6. Whose house I have made the wilderness,
And the salt land his dwelling place.
7. He scorneth the tumult of the city,
Neither heareth he the shoutings of the driver.
8. The range of the mountains is his pasture,
And he searcheth after every green thing.
9. Will the wild-ox be content to serve thee?
Or will he abide by thy crib?
10. Canst thou bind the wild-ox with his band in the furrow?
Or will he harrow the valleys after thee?
11. Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great?
Or wilt thou leave to him thy labour?
12. Wilt thou confide in him, that he will bring home thy seed,
And gather *the corn* of thy threshing-floor?
13. The wing of the ostrich rejoiceth;
But are her pinions and feathers kindly?
14. For she leaveth her eggs on the earth,
And warmeth them in the dust,
15. And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,
Or that the wild beast may trample them.
16. She is hardened against her young ones, as if they were not hers:
Though her labour be in vain, *she is* without fear;
17. Because God hath deprived her of wisdom,
Neither hath he imparted to her understanding.
18. What time she lifteth up herself on high,
She scorneth the horse and his rider.
19. Hast thou given the horse *his* might?
Hast thou clothed his neck with the quivering mane?
20. Hast thou made him to leap as a locust?
The glory of his snorting is terrible.

21. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength :
He goeth out to meet the armed men.
22. He mocketh at fear, and is not dismayed ;
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
23. The quiver rattleth against him,
The flashing spear and the javelin.
24. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage ;
Neither believeth he that it is the voice of the trumpet.
25. As oft as the trumpet *soundeth* he saith, Aha !
And he smelleth the battle afar off,
The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.
26. Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom,
And stretch her wings toward the south ?
27. Doth the eagle mount up at thy command,
And make her nest on high ?
28. She dwelleth on the rock and hath her lodging *there*,
Upon the crag of the rock, and the strong hold.
29. From thence she spieth out the prey ;
Her eyes behold it afar off.
30. Her young ones also suck up blood :
And where the slain are, there is she.

MUCH of the wisdom in this story is circular—it arrives at its starting-point. We have only heard human voices; yet the fallibility of human wisdom is a preparation for a higher disclosure, for when a man has been dosed with platitudes, described the circle of his own reason and found himself very much where he was before, he may be more disposed to listen to a higher wisdom than his own. We are not to think of the Divine presence as entering abruptly into this final scene, for He who sanctioned the trial of Job has been with him through all the stages of his experience, sustaining and inspiring his spirit, "keeping watch above his own."

At first it looks as though Job's fear of a dreadful manifestation of God has been realised ; but as the revelation becomes clearer, it is evident that he can distinguish between the roar of the elements and "a still small voice" which speaks distinctly to him. We may believe that Job is truthfully depicted by

one who fully entered into his experience as kneeling and listening with keen expectancy, wrapt, ecstatic, whilst the harmony of the heavenly host falls upon his ears.¹ The first word he hears assures him that in all his humiliation he has never forfeited the Divine respect. He has sunk lower than a worm in his own eyes—he is a spectacle of misery to the world, to angels, and to men—but he has never sunk lower than a man in God's sight. "Gird up now thy loins like a man."² Job! thou hast lost everything but thy manhood; but none can rob thee of that but thyself!

Stand up !
 Thou art the peer of any man
 Who moves the human mass among !
 As much a part of the great plan,
 Which in creation's dawn began,
 As any of the throng !

It is on these terms that God will speak to him.

I.

What is the Divine revelation out of the storm? It will not dawn upon us until we have gazed with awe-struck Job at the wisdom of the Divine architect, seen some of the marvels of His creation and felt the force of the Divine irony.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?
 Declare, if thou hast understanding. . . .
 When the morning stars sang together,
 And all the sons of God shouted for joy ?³

We see the earth, like a great edifice, sunk on deep-laid foundations, determined by line and

¹ See Blake, fourteenth illustration (Wicksteed, *Job*).

² The word "man" denotes not frailty (as in vii. 17), but strength.

³ xxxviii. 4, 7. Carlyle re-echoes this question (*Sartor Resartus*, Book III., chapter viii.).

measure, rising in symmetrical beauty according to the archetypal plan. We see the birth of the ocean, like an infant giant breaking from the womb, swathed in clouds as swaddling-bands, until its growing strength has to be curbed by the Divine decree, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."¹ Then the dawn overspreads the earth, the symbol of the triumph of good over evil, for as the light illumines the horizon it seizes, as it were, the coverlet of darkness in which the wicked are hidden, twitches it off, and shakes them out of it.² Does Job understand these things? He has spoken of the strength of the sea, and life in the underworld; but has he ever penetrated the recesses of the deep or stood at the portals of Sheol? The Divine irony does not spare him.

Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
And as for darkness, where is the place thereof . . . ?
Doubtless, thou knowest, for thou wast then born,
And the number of thy days is great !³

Snow and hail, thunder and dew, ice and hoary frost—what does Job know of their origin and their laws?⁴ The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork: the cluster of Pleiades⁵ and Orion—the Bear with her train of stars, marking the stately procession of the seasons—the watches of Mazzaroth—all speak of the Divine

¹ xxxviii. 8-11.

² xxxviii. 12-14.

³ xxxviii. 19-21.

⁴ xxxix. 29. Until I heard from my friend Mr. Tyrwhitt, writes Ruskin, of the cold felt at night on Sinai, I could not understand how deep the feeling of the Arab must have been respecting the Divine gift of the dew, nor with what sense of thankfulness for miraculous blessing the question of Job would be uttered, "The hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?" (*Deucalion*, chapter viii.).

⁵ The translation, "sweet influences of Pleiades" (A.V.), has no sanction in the original. There is no trace of the idea that man's life is ruled by the stars. ("The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves": *Julius Cæsar*, Act I., Scene 2.)

laws which govern heaven and earth.¹ Has Job laid down these laws? Has he unravelled the knots of the Pleiades,² or forged the chain by which the dog of Orion is held in leash?³ Can he make the lightning play at his call, or marshal cloud masses, or determine the track of the meteor?⁴

Let him now glance from heaven to earth and see the manifold wisdom of God displayed in the world of animal life. We hear the lions roaring after their prey, seeking their meat from God, and then crouching in their dens. We hear the croak of the ravens, which "neither sow nor reap," yet God feedeth them. We see the wild goats, shy and solitary, bearing their young among the rocks—the wild ass revelling in his liberty, who "scorneth the tumult of the city, neither heareth the shoutings of the driver." Who gave the ostrich her singular nature and powers? With wings so short she cannot hatch her eggs like other birds; yet in spite of this, she moves so swiftly in flight as to mock all her pursuers. The foolishness of forsaking her brood,⁵ united to the wisdom which almost scorns the ground, seems like "the work of creative power at play, revealing the inconceivable freedom and resource of the mind that operates in creation."⁶

Hast thou given the horse his might?

Hast thou clothed his neck with the quivering mane?⁷

¹ Mazzaroth may mean the signs of the Zodiac. The train or "sons of the bear" correspond to what we should call the horses in Charles's Wain.

² Cheyne.

³ Peake.

⁴ xxxviii. 35, 36 (see margin).

⁵ Fabre comments on the wisdom and foolishness of the spider (the Banded Epeira): "Poor fool! You upholster the wires of your cage with swan's down and you leave the eggs imperfectly protected" (*The Life of a Spider*).

⁶ Davidson.

⁷ The old rendering—"Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?"—which misled Carlyle (*The Hero as Prophet*), confused

The war-horse paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength :

He goeth out to meet the armed men.

He mocketh at fear, and is not dismayed ;

Neither turneth he back from the sword.

The quiver rattleth against him,

The flashing spear and the javelin.

He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage ;

Neither believeth he that it is the voice of the trumpet.¹

As oft as the trumpet soundeth he saith, Aha !

And he smelleth the battle afar off,

The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

“When the Arab steed hears the war-cry of the tribe, and sees the quivering spear of his rider, his eyes glitter with fire, his blood-red nostrils open wide, his neck is nobly arched, and his tail and mane are raised and spread to the wind.”²

Is it at Job's command that the eagle fixes her habitation on the dizzy crag ? Did he bestow her penetrating vision, her fearful instinct for blood ? The diversity of the animal creation, the strange dissimilarity of instinct and habit in creatures outwardly similar, the blending of contradictory characteristics in the same creature, the astonishing attributes and powers with which some of them are endowed, illustrate the providence, the resources, the manifold play of immeasurable wisdom and power.

Tiger, Tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry ?

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a word almost identical with that rendered “thunder” in verse 25. But Gray translates, “Hast thou clothed his neck with might?” Strahn prefers “with terror.” “The meaning of the word is very uncertain” (*Oxford Hebrew Lexicon*).

¹ “He hardly trusts his ears for gladness at the sound.”

² Layard, quoted by Strahn.

When the stars threw down their spears,
 And watered heaven with their tears,
 Did He smile His work to see?
 Did He who made the lamb make thee?¹

II.

The accumulative sonorous roll of interrogations admitting only one possible answer has a stunning effect. We cannot wonder that some have thought of it as nothing but a revelation of overwhelming force, an answer to human appeal which, far from interpreting our sense of justice and deepest hopes, seems to flout and crush them. No direct answer comes to Job to solve the mystery of his own sorrow. Man seems strangely left out altogether in the panorama of creation. It is "a land where no man is."² Is Job told anything he did not know and has not already described of the marvels of creation?³ Was he not well aware that he could not pass the test of a debate with Divine wisdom, would not be able to answer God's questions "one in a thousand"?⁴ Yet he had prayed, "May the Almighty answer me!"⁵ He has answered with an irony which excluded the very questions to which Job longed for an answer. How humiliating to a man who believed that vital issues were bound up with the solution of his problem! If humility was the one lesson Job had never learnt, no doubt the revelation of God in nature was designed to have this effect. "No suffering," says Ruskin, "no self-examination, however honest, however stern, no searching out of the heart by its own bitterness, is enough to convince man of his nothingness ✓

¹ *The Tiger* (Blake).³ See chapters ix., xii., xxvi.² xxxviii. 26.⁴ ix. 3.⁵ xxxi. 35.

before God ; but the sight of God's creation will do it."¹ But we have no evidence that this was the purpose for which Job had been tried, nor have we reason to believe that the sight of "the arch of the dayspring and the fountains of the deep" would accomplish by itself the work of spiritual restoration.

It may be that Job found God in nature a Presence which disturbed him

with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man.²

But what light did this throw on his own painful experience ? With all the value of natural history and its power on the human heart, the mysteries of life remain. Nature "half reveals and half conceals" the soul within it. In communion with the beauty and vitality of nature prayer may rise naturally to the heart, yet it may be little more than ecstatic reverie which does not discern in nature anything human or Divine.³ If we are told that Nature is an all-sufficient teacher, that "one impulse from a vernal wood can teach you more of man, of moral evil and of good than all the sages can,"⁴ we can only reply that Nature is not a moral teacher at all. What then did the revelation of God in nature mean to Job ?

We must recall his experience. He has success-

¹ Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii., chapter ii. (Everyman's Library).

² *Lines, Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* (Wordsworth).

³ See the experience of Richard Jefferies in *The Story of my Heart*.

⁴ Wordsworth, *The Tables Turned*.

fully emerged from his first trial and vindicated, as a representative of human nature, the reality of disinterested goodness. In passing this test, he has scaled heights of spiritual intuition he had never reached before; but nevertheless he has suffered an irreparable loss—for all speculative difficulties, all estrangement between friends were secondary questions beside the estrangement between Job and his Maker, the loss of fellowship with God. Nothing that Job or his friends can say or do is able to alter this. God, by His mysterious providence, has created the cloud, and He alone can interpose to remove it. It would have been easy (one would think) to have cleared up all Job's doubts by acquainting him with the secret cause of his trials, but this is not the way in which the Divine wisdom is to be disclosed, and it is clear that in Job's present condition of mind he is not fit for any final revelation. He must think differently of God Himself, must realise afresh what God is, before he will know that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. His dilemma is not really an intellectual one, for he has confessed his intellectual limitations and is more or less resigned to them.¹ He is in religious difficulty, and for this reason the Divine revelation must appeal to his religious sense more than to the region of the understanding. "It is a solution to the heart, not to the intellect. It is such a solution as only God could give . . . which does not solve the perplexity but buries it under the tide of a fuller life and joy in God. It is a solution as broad as Job's life and not merely the measure of his understanding."²

It is, apparently, for this reason that Almighty

¹ Chapter xxviii.

² Davidson.

Wisdom does not condescend to say, "Come now, let us reason together." We recall a famous argument which said, "You complain of darkness in your own life—look into the world and behold darkness everywhere."¹ This argument will always have its uses, but the answer out of the storm is stamped by a Divine authority which can say, "Look away from your own darkness to a world luminous with God. In that light you will see light." It was the silence of God that was most crushing to Job, and the fact that He had spoken to him at last, in an unmistakable voice, would relieve the heart from its worst oppression and raise expectations of restored communion.

III.

We must not anticipate the vision of God which gradually dawned upon Job, but we can trace the way in which he came to see everything in a new light.

Job had taken upon himself to prescribe the manner of the Divine appearing; He is to divest Himself of His almightiness, adopt a sweet reasonableness, and speak with Job as an equal.² Elihu, as the messenger of God, has to a certain extent conformed to this procedure; but Job has yet to learn that God fulfils Himself in many ways and cannot be bound down to any ruling. If a storm was the usual accompaniment of a Divine appearance we need not think that it was designed to terrorise the suppliant, and as God whispered into the ear of an Elijah amid the convulsions of earthquake, wind, and fire, so He could make Job the confidant of a personal

¹ Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. See Davidson's reference, *Book of Job*.

² Chapters ix. and xiii.

revelation. But first of all Job's eyes must be opened to a bigger world than ever he had lived in before.

Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?¹

The world may seem to be a mighty maze, but it is not without a plan in which Job has a place. The individual life cannot be understood apart from the scheme in which all life is involved—in fact, the individual point of view without reference to the Divine system of government “darkens” the whole meaning of life. The assumption is that we would need to understand the world to grasp the meaning of our own lives, and unless we can accept our place in a Divine order we may lose the place we have in it. This is the peril to which Job has exposed himself; for he has not only questioned the Divine wisdom in his own case, but assumed the right to pass judgment on the government of the world. He must take his proper place again—the place of dependence upon a higher wisdom than his own—before he can hope to see any clearer vision of truth.

Our life is but a little holding lent
To do a mighty labour : we are one
With heaven and the stars when it is spent,
To serve God's aim : else die we with the sun.²

The spending of our lives to serve a Divine purpose, the doing of a mighty labour, can only be secured by the diligent cultivation of the “little holding” in which God has placed us. Job has admitted that in view of the Divine wisdom any complete philosophy of the universe is beyond him;³ but he has said many foolish things since then, been too self-centred, and

¹ xxxviii. 2. The word “counsel” indicates that God does not leave things to chance (Peake).

² *Vittoria* (G. Meredith).

³ Chapter xxviii.

has yet to learn that his own life is not the measure of the universe. If the earth was made for man alone, why does God cause it to rain in a land where no man is?¹ There is no waste in creation—the dry clod and the desert grass are dear to Him though no man is near them. Why should they not be? Why should I say that dew falling on a thorn in a desert is wasted, but falling on my flower shows proper economy?² Job has to learn that, though man has an assured place in God's world, all things do not converge to him. We feel the edge of the Divine irony in pressing home the truth; but this method of teaching must not be misunderstood or confounded with any spirit of comedy which mocks our life. A sufferer like Heine felt the irony of God weighing heavily upon him, because he confused the wisdom of God with the wit of man;³ and it must be confessed that, in face of the absurdities, the proud vaunts, the impossible feats of man, the gentlest human irony is not without an element of scorn.⁴ But we must not transfer this quality to the mind of God.

Through Thy vast creative plan,
Looking from the worm to man,
There is pity in thine eyes,
But no hatred nor surprise.⁵

If human irony differs from satire "in not sharply driving into the quivering sensibilities" and may even conceal a caress when it stings,⁶ we may understand a Divine form of speech which shows,

¹ xxxviii. 26.

² Mark Rutherford.

³ See the *Confessions* of Heine, and Thomas Hardy's comment on the Divine method with *Tess* at the end of that story.

⁴ This would apply to even the kindest of ironists, Anatole France.

⁵ *Andrew Rykman's Prayer* (Whittier).

⁶ See *An Essay on Comedy* (George Meredith).

without wounding or crushing, yet with telling force, the disproportion of the human to the truly Divine, of human understanding to perfect Wisdom, of human effort to the reach of true Power.

The Divine irony does not imply that Job was wrong in seeking to fathom the meaning of his experience or in making bold guesses, for he will receive commendation for speaking "the thing that is right."¹ It is a rebuke for attempting to do what was beyond him, for speaking words without knowledge. ". . . Man is related to God in two ways—as a spiritual being and as a creature. As a spiritual being he may justify himself, and speak what God Himself cannot override and will certainly affirm; as a creature he is in complete ignorance of the lot it may be right for the Ruler of the universe to assign him . . . the *spirit* of the man is right in asserting the absolute character of his highest spiritual convictions against any array of external argument; the ignorant *creature* is wrong in criticising the acts of the Creator."² Job seems to have reached this conclusion in his admission that the Divine wisdom was beyond him,³ but he did not remain in that subdued reflective frame of mind, and still needed an authoritative voice to convince him of the limits of his understanding. If the first impression of the Divine answer is that God is everything and man is nothing, we shall see that in the final issue, Job's claim is not lost to sight. The "creature" is humbled, but man as a spiritual being is ennobled, for God is speaking to him in a language he can understand, and spirit will meet with spirit in a fellowship which can never be broken.

¹ xlii. 7.

² "The Poetry of the Old Testament," *Literary Essays* (R. H. Hutton).

³ Chapter xxviii.

CHAPTER XVII

THE VISION OF GOD

I hearing get who had but ears,
And sight who had but eyes before,
I moments live who lived but years,
And truth discern who knew but learning's lore.

THOREAU.

CHAPTER XL.

1. Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said,
2. Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty ?
He that argueth with God, let him answer it.
3. Then Job answered the Lord, and said,
4. Behold, I am of small account ; what shall I answer thee ?
I lay mine hand upon my mouth.
5. Once have I spoken, and I will not answer ;
Yea twice, but I will proceed no further.
6. Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
7. Gird up thy loins now like a man :
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
8. Wilt thou even disannul my judgement ?
Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified ?
9. Or hast thou an arm like God ?
And canst thou thunder with a voice like him ?
10. Deck thyself now with excellency and dignity ;
And array thyself with honour and majesty.
11. Pour forth the overflowings of thine anger :
And look upon every one that is proud, and abase him.
12. Look on every one that is proud, *and* bring him low ;
And tread down the wicked where they stand.
13. Hide them in the dust together ;
Bind their faces in the hidden *place*.
14. Then will I also confess of thee
That thine own right hand can save thee.
15. Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee ;
He eateth grass as an ox.
16. Lo now, his strength is in his loins,
And his force is in the muscles of his belly.
17. He moveth his tail like a cedar :
The sinews of his thighs are knit together.

18. His bones are *as* tubes of brass ;
His limbs are like bars of iron.
19. He is the chief of the ways of God :
He *only* that made him can make his sword to approach *unto*
him.
20. Surely the mountains bring him forth food ;
Where all the beasts of the field do play.
21. He lieth under the lotus trees,
In the covert of the reed, and the fen.
22. The lotus trees cover him with their shadow ;
The willows of the brook compass him about.
23. Behold, if a river overflow, he trembleth not :
He is confident, though Jordan swell even to his mouth.
24. Shall any take him when he is on the watch,
Or pierce through his nose with a snare ?

CHAPTER XLI.

1. Canst thou draw out leviathan with a fish hook ?
Or press down his tongue with a cord ?
2. Canst thou put a rope into his nose ?
Or pierce his jaw through with a hook ?
3. Will he make many supplications unto thee ?
Or will he speak soft words unto thee ?
4. Will he make a covenant with thee,
That thou shouldest take him for a servant for ever ?
5. Wilt thou play with him as with a bird ?
Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens ?
6. Shall the bands of *fishermen* make traffic of him ?
Shall they part him among the merchants ?
7. Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons,
Or his head with fish spears ?
8. Lay thine hand upon him ;
Remember the battle, and do so no more.
9. Behold, the hope of him is in vain :
Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him ?
10. None is so fierce that he dare stir him up :
Who then is he that can stand before me ?
11. Who hath first given unto me, that I should repay him ?
Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.
12. I will not keep silence concerning his limbs,
Nor his mighty strength, nor his comely proportion.
13. Who can strip off his outer garment ?
Who shall come within his double bridle ?
14. Who can open the doors of his face ?
Round about his teeth is terror.
15. *His* strong scales are *his* pride,
Shut up together *as with* a close seal.

16. One is so near to another,
That no air can come between them.
17. They are joined one to another ;
They stick together, that they cannot be sundered.
18. His neesings flash forth light,
And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.
19. Out of his mouth go burning torches,
And sparks of fire leap forth.
20. Out of his nostrils a smoke goeth,
As of a seething pot and *burning* rushes.
21. His breath kindleth coals,
And a flame goeth forth from his mouth.
22. In his neck abideth strength,
And terror danceth before him.
23. The flakes of his flesh are joined together :
They are firm upon him ; they cannot be moved.
24. His heart is as firm as a stone ;
Yea, firm as the nether millstone.
25. When he raiseth himself up, the mighty are afraid :
By reason of consternation they are beside themselves.
26. If one lay at him with the sword, it cannot avail ;
Nor the spear, the dart, nor the pointed shaft.
27. He counteth iron as straw,
And brass as rotten wood.
28. The arrow cannot make him flee :
Slingstones are turned with him into stubble.
29. Clubs are counted as stubble :
He laugheth at the rushing of the javelin.
30. His underparts are *like* sharp potsherds :
He spreadeth *as it were* a threshing wain upon the mire.
31. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot ;
He maketh the sea like ointment.
32. He maketh a path to shine after him ;
One would think the deep to be hoary.
33. Upon earth there is not his like,
That is made without fear.
34. He beholdeth everything that is high :
He is king over all the sons of pride.

CHAPTER XLII. 1-6.

1. Then Job answered the Lord and said,
2. I know that thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be restrained.
3. Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge ?
Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not,
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
4. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak ;
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ;
But now mine eye seeth thee,
6. Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent
In dust and ashes.

THE soul's awakening is often a gradual process. There are those who know that serene and blessed mood, when

we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.¹

But the seer has often to confess that the vision of God is not immediate. If "the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to *see* something and tell what it *saw* in a plain way,"² it is equally true that between the vision and the utterance there may be a period of effort concealed by the apparent ease of expression. Among modern seers the poet Blake has been claimed as one who saw immediately into the life of things, and never blotted a line ; but those who are better informed know how painfully some of his most finished work was produced. A new thought is conceived, takes gradual shape in the mind, is roughly transferred to language, which, through infinite pains, becomes the symbol of a Divine idea.³

It was in this way that Job came to have a vision of God. The revelation of God in nature is to produce the desired effect, but there is still much that is intractable in Job, and the Divine Speaker needs to enforce His appeal with a peremptory demand before Job will break a silence in which he has wrapped a wounded spirit.

¹ *Tintern Abbey* (Wordsworth).

² Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. iii., part iv., chapter xvi. (Everyman's Library).

³ Compare the original and finished drafts of *The Tiger* in Blake's *Poems* (Oxford edition).

I.

Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said,
Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty?
He that argueth with God, let him answer it.

Then Job answered the Lord, and said,
Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee?
I lay mine hand upon my mouth.
Once have I spoken, and I will not answer;
Yea twice, but I will proceed no further.

What condition of mind do these words reveal? It seems to betray the attitude of a man who is silenced but not convinced, who intends to keep his thoughts to himself. We remember the spirit of a Heine, whose submission to his fate concealed a smouldering defiance.¹ There was an entranced lover of Nature who cried to her, "I am not enough; I am little and contemptible," yet he failed to discover the indwelling spirit which animated her charms.² The answer from the storm has made Job see God's world in something of its true perspective, and with a new sense of the infinite he is not so sure of his own standing; but this does not necessarily mean that he has had a religious experience. It is noticeable that Job does not retract anything he has said, but simply ventures to leave it before God without further comment; and so long as there was any rankling protestation against the Divine dealings he could not possess peace of mind. If Job can still be described as a "caviller"³ he has yet much to learn, and needs to be roused from a mere dogged submission to a temper more becoming to the recipient of a revelation. Not content with asserting his own innocence, Job has challenged the moral government of the world, condemned God

¹ *Confessions*.

² Richard Jefferies, *The Story of my Heart*.

³ xl. 2.

in order to justify himself, and the second speech is designed to clench the argument that man does not possess the faculties to pass such judgment. The Divine irony, infinitely keen yet infinitely kind,¹ invites the critic to mount the throne of the world, seize the reins of government, and inaugurate an era of peace.

To test his powers, let him practise his skill in a limited sphere—let him put harness on two monsters—behemoth and leviathan²—and let him subdue them to his will!

Canst thou draw out leviathan with a fish hook?
 Or press down his tongue with a cord?
 Canst thou put a rope into his nose?
 Or pierce his jaw through with a hook?
 Will he make many supplications unto thee?
 Or will he speak soft words unto thee?
 Will he make a covenant with thee,
 That thou shouldest take him for a servant for ever?
 Wilt thou play with him as with a bird?
 Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?³

Almighty Wisdom adopts here the method of teaching religion by analogy. The fierce, the incongruous, the irresponsible, which Job has found in human life is reflected in nature, and, if he had the power to tame the untameable, no doubt he would be able to redress all anomalies, to "look on every one that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked where they stand."⁴ Man has not lacked the assurance to believe that he could undertake the management of the world. We remember the Greek story of Phaethon, who obtained his father's leave to drive the chariot of the sun for a day, and nearly set the world on fire. "If I were God" is the visionary's dream of a better world.

¹ Strahn.

³ xli. 1-5.

² The hippopotamus and the crocodile.

⁴ xl. 12.

Ah, Love ! could thou and I with Fate conspire
 To grasp the sorry scheme of things entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
 Remould it nearer to the heart's desire !¹

Thomas Hobbes² conceived of an ideal society under the name of "that great Leviathan called the Commonwealth." It was an automatic view of life, in which the instinct of self-preservation secured the welfare of the State, and there was a self-sufficiency in the philosophy of Hobbes akin to the spirit which was latent in a good deal of Job's criticism of life. But, if Hobbes represents the last word of a hard and narrow logic, Job represents the soul's awakening with a sense of wonder and awe.

Job is not learning a lesson in natural history, but a lesson in religion, and the sight of these formidable monsters defying his touch simply completed the course of instruction which began when the glory of God first passed before him. Who is he—humiliated in the presence of God's creatures—to enter into conflict with their Creator ? How can he—baffled by denizens of his own world—grasp the complexity of the universe, the endless multiplicity of the Divine interests ? How can he think of God by any human standard in the face of his own incompetence to wield a single attribute of Providence either in his own affairs or over the lower creation ?

Yet, as the revelation sinks into his mind, something more than the sense of his own insignificance dawns upon him. Some dim consciousness of power to think God's thoughts after Him makes his submission a noble act, "that stoop of the soul which, in bending, upraises it too."³ Some spiritual vision

¹ *Omar Khayyám.*

³ *Saul* (R. Browning).

² 1588-1679.

has shot across him, cleansing the heart from the last vestige of self-righteousness, from all the perilous stuff which weighed upon it, and it is a chastened man who looks up into God's face with that purity which can see the invisible.

II.

It was when an ancient mariner saw living, happy creatures, whose beauty no tongue could declare, that a spring of love gushed from him—that self-same moment his heart, “dry as dust,” felt it could pray, and, as he prayed, the accursed thing fell from him—

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.¹

If Job's heart were warmed with that love he would not wait to analyse his feelings, but simply rejoice in a new-found happiness. How could he ever have thought of God as his enemy or persecutor? The God of the whole earth, who cared for the ravens and gently led those that were with young, cared for him! God had not spoken to him as man had done—denying his sincerity, slighting his deepest convictions; and what unspeakable joy to know that He whom he seemed to have lost had come back to him—nay, that He had never forsaken him, and was throwing him back upon himself to find in his own heart the assurance of Divine comfort! This is the peace beyond understanding which comes to the man who finds himself one with

¹ *The Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge).

God in a mystical union which is a secret between God and the soul. We must not read in Job's mind what was not there—light on all his trouble, discovery of the ends God had been working out, the harmony of man co-operating with God. Job's life was still wrapped in mystery ; but as his thoughts became more defined they found vent in language which indicates the higher spiritual ground on which he is standing :

I know that thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be restrained.
Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge ?
Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not,
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

This is no bare confession of the Divine omnipotence, for Job does not now think of any single Divine attribute apart from the wisdom and goodness which are over all His works. If he does not understand, the darkness is not in God but in himself. He has charged God with injustice when he should have charged himself with ignorance ; he has dogmatised when he should have wondered. His highest wisdom is to echo the Divine words : " Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge ? " ¹
" Declare unto thee ! That be far from me ! " ²

Job is content to take his place in a Divine order, to leave himself in God's hands. " God loves order ; in the order He loves, my sufferings have a function and a work. I may not see the end, may not love the means, but God is Himself the pledge that, through these painful means, ends most worthy of Him and most blessed for me shall be realised. " ³

¹ Job repeats xxxviii. 2.

² Job repeats the Divine challenge to speak (xxxviii. 3), and deprecates such a thing.

³ A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*.

The difference between the old way of looking at things and the new he can only describe in one phrase:

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ;
But now mine eye seeth thee.

Oh, the unutterable relief to know that the traditional God of his friends and of his own desperate imagining was not the true God. In the traditional school, lessons had been learned by rote before experience had questioned the truth of them. Now he could say, "The theology is defective, but God is found true!" All his thinking seemed like hearsay compared with this personal conviction: "Now mine eye seeth thee!" Had he not once expressed as the summit of all his hope: "I shall see God—I, for myself!"¹ After "life's fitful fever" was spent, he had hoped to see his Vindicator face to face! His present experience—so real and vivid—had eclipsed even that glorious hope. Still hampered by mortal pain and shadowed by its mystery, he had gained the beatific vision, and knew that a man may suffer the loss of all things, and yet be sure of the love of God!

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent
In dust and ashes.

There is not a word in the Divine speech of the standard of righteousness, and yet Job has a deep conviction of sin. He is not confessing the sin of which the Satan predicted he would be guilty—the sin of impiety—nor the secret sins which his friends declared to be the cause of all his trouble, but there is no unreality in Job's confession. Even if his language is not so strong—though he may only have said, "I abhor my words"²—Job confesses

¹ xix. 26-27.

² xlii. 6 (margin).

that he has committed himself to an altogether wrong view of life. "He is not ashamed to change his opinions, but he is profoundly ashamed of the opinions which he changes."¹ He will receive the Divine approval for the spirit which actuated his search for truth, but the sufferer speaks his last words as a sinner, conscious of an impurity inseparable from a true vision of God. In the eyes of the world he had lived as a man of honour; in his inner life he had been true to the dictates of conscience; but in the light of heaven he knew he had come short of the glory of God.

III.

We cannot analyse Job's experience beyond what his words reveal, but we may associate him with the old picture of a man issuing from a dark cavern into the dazzling light of day. His mind must have known something of the process (described by a master of thought²) essential to the discovery of the difference between conventional sanctions and those that bear the signature of truth. False notions take possession of our minds, and these become the "idols" of our imagination. They lead us astray, because we shut ourselves up in the "cave" of a limited experience and so easily become the victims of false conclusions. The only way of escape is to renounce these "idols of the mind, and become a learner, for the entrance into the kingdom of truth is like the entrance into the kingdom of heaven, wherein none may enter except as a little child."³

¹ Strahn.

² Bacon.

³ Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Book I., Aphorisms XXXIX.-LXII., "On the Four Classes of Idols which beset Men's Minds." (Compare Plato's *Republic*, Book VII., on idols of the cave.)

If Job regained the child heart in this way, it does not lower the value of his past experience, his guesses at truth and earnest questioning of God's way, for faith is never opposed to reason, only to sight. His experience simply confirmed the fact that we live by faith.

We feel how little the vision of God solved the mystery of Job's trial. There is no new revelation, no vindication of the Divine righteousness, no clearing of Job's character; and we wonder that he should be content to forget all the questions he had wanted to ask when an audience was granted to him. Job is never to know the origin of his trial, or why the same result could not have been achieved in a less painful way. It is Divine Wisdom which withholds from our limited perception a final answer to the mystery of experience. "It is no accident that the poet refrains from putting in God's mouth any explanation of Job's sufferings. To men oppressed by the mystery of their own or the world's pain, the explanation of an individual case is of little worth, unless it admits of wider application. . . . The only answer we can get to the problem of pain is, the poet will tell us, this answer: The soul's certainty is the soul's secret. The spirit has escaped its difficulties by soaring above them. If we know God, no other knowledge matters. . . . To trust God when we understand Him would be but a sorry triumph. To trust God when we have every reason for distrusting Him, save our inward certainty of Him, is the supreme victory of religion. This is the victory which Job achieves."¹ We want to know how the story ends without reading the book; we want to know the answer to the sum

¹ Peake, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*.

without working it out ; but if this were allowed, it would defeat the Divine purpose in human life, which is not to produce undeveloped freaks of learning, but finished character. Do we not see something of this finish in the triumph of Job's patience ? It was never dumb resignation to the inevitable, never the suppression of an heroic spirit ; always an active virtue, and now we see it at its best. Still racked with pain, still the victim of slander, seeing no purpose his sufferings could possibly serve for himself or the world, and with no prospect of any compensation for his trials, Job expresses his calm trust in God : " Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee ; my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever !" ¹

¹ Psalm lxxiii.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

Our lives, our tears, as water
Are spilled upon the ground ;
God giveth no man quarter,
Yet God a means hath found
Though hope and faith have vanished
And even love grows dim—
A means whereby His banished
Be not expelled from Him.

KIPLING : *The Rabbi's Song.*

CHAPTER XLII. 7 TO END.

7. And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends : for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant
8. Job hath. Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering ; and my servant Job shall pray for you ; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly ; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is
9. right, as my servant Job hath. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did according as the Lord commanded them : and the Lord
10. accepted Job. And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends : and the Lord gave Job
11. twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house : and they bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him : every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one a
12. ring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning : and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen,
13. and a thousand she-asses. He had also seven sons and three
14. daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima ; and the name of the second, Keziah ; and the name of the
15. third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job : and their father gave

16. them inheritance among their brethren. And after this Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his
 17. sons' sons, *even* four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.

THE Epilogue to the story of Job is as vital a part of it as the Prologue—the happy ending is no more unreal than the happy beginning. We do not forget the attempt of Tate to turn the tragedy of King Lear into a comedy, and Charles Lamb's comment on it:¹ "Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan . . . to draw the mighty beast about more easily. A happy ending!—as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through—the flaying of his feelings alive—did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after . . . why all this pudder and preparation—why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? . . . as if at his years and with his experience anything was left but to die?"

Lamb's protest against an artificial treatment of the tragedy of King Lear is endorsed by modern criticism, but it cannot be applied to the story of Job. The tragedy of King Lear leaves no scope for a happy sequel, for it moves in a region of thought where Fate broods over everything; and the sufferer himself, though he has given his throne away, retains his imperiousness until he is bereft of his reason.

It all points to a tragic ending.

The story of Job is a religious experience. God is over all, controlling, overruling events, and the sufferer, who never loses his spirit in misfortune, is purified and ennobled by it. Job's reward is inward

¹ Charles Lamb, *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare*. Nahum Tate, 1652-1715. His perversion of *King Lear* held the stage from 1680 to 1838.

and spiritual; but since the special purpose of his trial had been fulfilled, and he had successfully emerged from it, there was no reason why he should not be restored. There was, perhaps, a deeper reason for this happy consummation. It was due not only to the character of Job, but to the character of God Himself. There is a very real sense in which Divine Wisdom placed not only Job but itself on trial. When the challenge to try Job was accepted it involved a solemn responsibility; and since the Satan, having discharged his duty, has disappeared from the scene, no one is left to face the reckoning day save Job and his Maker. Job had never looked to the restoration of health and fortune as the condition of Divine favour, and we are not to think of any outward prosperity as the inevitable sequel to his story. The end of Job does not confirm the old theory that the righteous are always visibly rewarded, and he might have died on his ash-heap (as other good men have died) with no outward change to corroborate his spiritual experience. But if confidence in Job has been fully justified, it was consistent with the Divine character to ratify it; and to make this unmistakable to the world necessitated a change of fortune, here and now, to those whose horizon was limited to the present life.

I.

And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

When we recall the many wise words of the friends compared with the rashness of Job, this Divine judgment demands some explanation. A man who has been charged with "darkening counsel

by words without knowledge" is praised for speaking the thing that is right, whilst the representatives of traditional wisdom are charged with the moral offence of "folly," and we must look for the reason for this final judgment in the character of those to whom it is addressed. Whilst we cannot deny the sincerity of the friends, this virtue did not atone for glaring faults which had made them unworthy advocates for God. By ignoring moral difficulties they had cast more discredit upon the ways of Providence than all Job's questioning of their justice; for to deny mystery in the world is more untrue than the boldest affirmation of it. The friends are blamed, not because they did not say much that was right, but because they were not in harmony with the truth of things; and though the Divine judgment does not sanction all Job's criticisms of life, it does sanction, on the whole, the spirit in which he gave it, the refusal to strain the truth, to make false inferences from an imperfect knowledge. "There is a difference," says a master of religious language,¹ "between truth and veracity . . . veracity is merely the correspondence between some particular statement and facts; truth is correspondence between a man's whole soul and reality. It is possible for a man to say that which, unknown to him, is false, and yet he may be true . . . it is possible, on the other hand, for a man to utter veracities, and yet at the same time to be false to himself, to his brother, and to his God." Now, most of what the friends said were veracious statements, and much that Job said was mistaken; and yet those veracities of theirs were so torn from all

¹ F. W. Robertson, *Lectures on the Epistles to the Corinthians*, xviii.

connection with truth that they became falsehoods ; whilst Job, perpetually blundering, was yet a true man, ever searching for the truth. We can share the spirited protest of Coleridge¹ against the idea of putting the special pleading of the friends on the same level of inspiration as the reasoning of Job when we remember that these self-styled champions of God are blamed, not for speaking wrongfully of Job, but of Him whose interpreters they professed to be. The reference must be to the hard-and-fast theory of Providence which they advocated ; and the Divine judgment, at least, implies both the repudiation of that strict meaning of affliction and the seal of approval on every honest effort to take a wider view of God's government. Had not Job warned his friends of an impending judgment on those who spoke wrongfully for God ?² Had he not charged them with a partiality inconsistent with a true religious spirit ? Had not Eliphaz³ unconsciously predicted the absolution of the guilty through the intercessory prayer of a man with clean hands ? We do not forget the assertion of one of the prophets⁴ that not even a good man (not even Noah, Daniel, or Job) could save another man from the consequences of his own sin ; but it is always true that " the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and Job, by virtue of his sincerity, is chosen for this part. " Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering ; and my servant Job shall pray for you ; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly."⁵

¹ *Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit*, Letter III.

² xiii. 5-II.

³ xxii. 30.

⁴ Ezek. xiv.

⁵ xlii. 8. A large atoning offering, supplemented by Job's prayers, presupposes a great transgression (Peake).

II.

Job acts as priest for his friends as he had, in happier days, acted for his household. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends."¹ This is the climax of Job's triumph. He has lost the sense of his own need in the love of God and man; but, as he prays, not expecting any deliverance from his own burden, the chains of his captivity, as though touched by an angel, fall from him, and he knows that he is free. All his subsequent prosperity pales before the liberty of spirit by which he shakes off the bondage of the past and is at peace with God and man. We have seen that Job's restoration was not accomplished to satisfy any orthodox demand for compensation; whilst, at the same time, there was no reason why calamities, obviously undeserved, should not be removed. But it may be that a still deeper meaning lies beneath the surface of Job's experience. Prosperity is as much the gift of God as adversity, and may prove a blessing or a curse. "Prosperity, enjoyment, happiness, comfort, peace, whatever be the name by which we designate that state in which life is to our own selves pleasant and delightful, as long as they are sought or prized as things essential, so far have a tendency to disenoble our nature and are a sign that we are still in servitude to selfishness. Only when they lie outside us as ornaments merely to be worn or laid aside as God pleases—only then may such things be possessed with impunity."² In his early days Job had served God "for nought," but he had regarded material prosperity as the invariable accompaniment of the Divine favour.

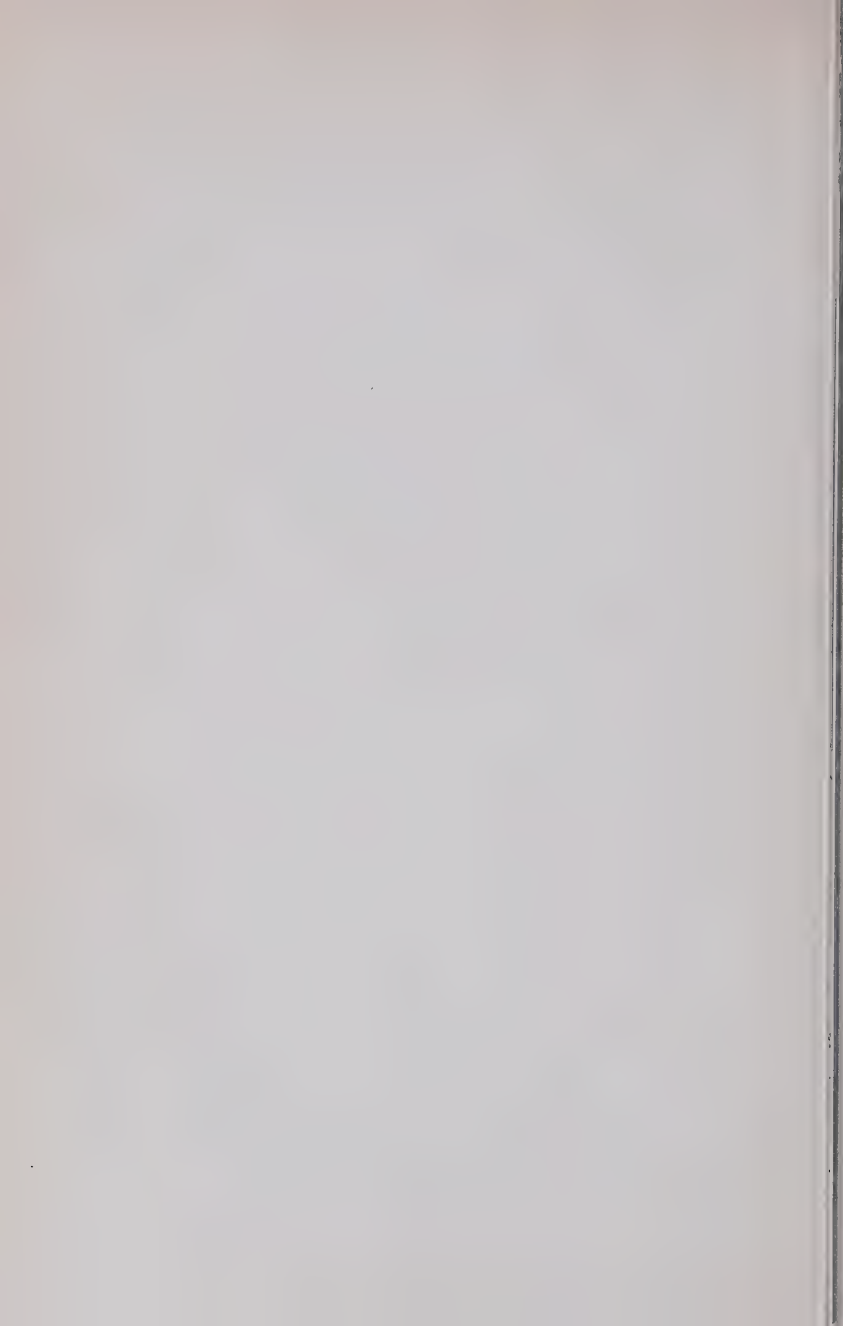
¹ xlii. 10.² Froude, *Short Studies*, "The Book of Job."

He did not do so now—for in pain, he has found precious things he had never possessed in days of health and prosperity. These blessings have been restored to him because he had learned to do without them; and as a bird, fluttering from branch to branch or soaring into the air, sings a sweeter note than when it is in a cage, so Job's song of deliverance would be sweeter than his songs in the night. We leave him surrounded by his family and friends,¹ and add his name to those of famous men

Whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten.
 With their seed shall remain continually a good inheritance;
 Their children are within the covenants.
 Their seed standeth fast,
 And their children for their sakes.
 Their seed shall remain for ever,
 And their glory shall not be blotted out.
 Their bodies were buried in peace,
 And their name liveth to all generations.
 Peoples will declare their wisdom,
 And the congregation telleth out their praise.²

¹ "Every man also gave him a piece of money" (xlii. 11). This money (Heb. *kesitah*, Gen. xxxiii. 19) was trifling in value—simply a token of congratulation.

² Ecclus. xlv.



APPENDIX

NOTE A

SOME OF THE LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

IN the study of this book I have examined chiefly the following writers :

- EWALD : *The Book of Job*, 1854 (trans. 1882).
RENAN : *The Book of Job*, 1859.
DELITZSCH : *The Book of Job*, 1866.
FROUDE : *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, vol. i. ("Job"), 1867.
GODET : *Studies in the Old Testament* ("Job"), 1874.
COOK : *Speaker's Commentary* ("Job"), 1878.
MOZLEY : *Theological Essays*, vol. ii. ("Job"), 1878.
Revisers of the Book of Job, 1881.
DAVIDSON : *The Book of Job*, 1884.
FAIRBAIRN : *The City of God* ("Job"), 1886.
BRADLEY : *Lectures on the Book of Job*, 1887.
CHEYNE : *Job and Solomon*, 1887.
WATSON : *Expositor's Bible* ("Job"), 1892.
GENUNG : *The Epic of the Inner Life*, 1892.
DAVISON : *The Wisdom Literature*, 1894.
DUHM : *The New World*, 1894.
BUDDE : "Synopsis of Job" in *Expository Times*, 1896.
MOULTON : *The Literary Study of the Bible* ("Job"), 1896.
CHARLES, *Eschatology*, 1898.
GIBSON, *Westminster Commentary on Job*, 1899.
SMITH, G. A. : *Modern Criticism and Preaching of Old Testament*, 1899.
DRIVER, *Introduction to Literature of Old Testament*, 1901.
ADDIS : *The Temple Bible* ("Job"), 1902.
MARSHALL : *Job* (American Commentary), 1904.
PEAKE : *Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, 1904.
The Century Bible ("Job"), 1904.
DRIVER : *Introduction to the Book of Job*, based on the Revised Version, 1906.
CAIRD, E. : *Lay Sermons*, "The Faith of Job," 1907.
WICKSTEED : *Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1910.
STRAHN : *The Book of Job*, 1913.
DRIVER AND BUCHANAN GRAY : *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (International Critical Commentary), 1921.

NOTE B

ON THE AGE OF THE BOOK

There is hardly any age of the world, from patriarchal times down to the period after the Captivity, to which this book has not been assigned. Touches of patriarchal life and thought are mainly seen in the use of Divine names (El, Eloah, Shaddai, signifying the bare idea of almightiness without indicating the Divine character); in Job's priesthood as the head of the family; in the burnt offering (*ólah*), which was not the sin offering of post-exilic days; in the mention of an ancient piece of money (*kesitah*, xlii. 11), etc.

These archaic allusions, however, simply indicate that the writer "has skilfully thrown the colours of this age over his composition,"¹ for his own nationality is not concealed. Not only does he employ the Israelitish name of God (Yahweh [Jehovah], which expresses the idea of what God will be to His people), but he allows his hero occasionally to use it (i. 21, xii. 9), and also to betray familiarity with customs and moral ideas foreign to the patriarchs. In references to pledges (xxiv. 9), to landmarks (xxiv. 2), to judicial procedure (xxxi. 9, 26)—peculiar, as legal enactments, to the Book of Deuteronomy—"the voice," says Davidson, "is the voice of a godly child of Israel, although the hands may be those of a son of Edom."

To what age may the authorship be ascribed?

(a) The Mosaic authorship has been maintained to recent times (Rawlinson, 1891); but this opinion,

¹ Davidson.

expressed in the Talmud, is not regarded as a matter of debate in modern criticism. (The law of retribution as expressed in Exod. xx. 5 and Job's questioning of the justice of it cannot be reconciled with the Mosaic age.) The name of Moses would never have suggested itself to anyone, says Delitzsch, had not the studious avoidance in the book of reference to the law, prophecy, history, etc., of Israel produced the appearance of pre-Sinaitic origin.

(b) The earliest period to which the book can be assigned is the age of Solomon, with whom the "wisdom literature" begins; but the maturity of religious reflection in this book is very different from the smooth, proverbial wisdom attributed to Solomon. In Proverbs the teaching is positive, and the law that it is well with the righteous and ill with the wicked is not subjected to question. (But compare Prov. xiii. 9 with Job's question in xxi. 17.) Just as the authorship of Ecclesiastes is denied to Solomon by nearly all critics to-day, partly because it points to a state of oppression, violence, and misery which cannot be reconciled with the worst days of Solomon, so in the Book of Job questions concerning Providence have become those acute problems which mark an advanced stage in religious speculation. These questions were hardly formulated earlier than the seventh century, when national calamities gave the problem of suffering a place in religious thought it had never held before. (Fall of Israel, 722 B.C.; Babylonian Captivity, 597 B.C.)

(c) There are striking similarities between this book and the unknown prophet of the Exile (Isa. xl. onwards). We have the same lofty conception of God (Isa. xlv. 24; Job ix. 8), the same references to

Rahab (Isa. li. 9; Job xxvi. 12). Most noticeable is the likeness between the "suffering servant" in the second Isaiah and Job. He is innocent (Isa. liii. 11), yet afflicted in such a way as to strike terror into the beholders and make them think he is smitten of God (Isa. lii. 14, liii. 3), until he is finally vindicated and restored to honour. Yet the profound explanation of suffering as "vicarious" ("surely he hath borne our griefs," Isa. liii.) is not to be found in the Book of Job. Is that because the teaching of the second Isaiah is a later development of faith (Fairbairn) or because the writer of Job found no help in it as a key to the problem? We do not know; but there are reasons for believing that the Book of Job is a still later production.

(1) Isa. xl.-xlv. is a sustained argument against heathenism and idolatry, whilst in Job this conflict does not emerge at all. The power, wisdom, and supremacy of God are here taken for granted as an impregnable doctrine. We may hear rumours of past conflict, but paganism, which looms so large in the literature of Israel down to the return from exile, and even later, is left almost entirely out of account in the Book of Job.

(2) The suffering servant in Isa. liii. is, no doubt, in the first case, a suffering nation personified. "Attention was at first too much absorbed by the colossal disasters of the nation for the individual case (such as Job) to receive attention . . . the author of Job carries the question a stage farther from the nation to the individual" (Peake). This suggests a close affinity between Job and the prophet Jeremiah (called to prophesy 672-626 B.C.), who first clearly conceived religion as a personal relation between God and man. In their tragic

loneliness and appeal to God as the sole arbiter of history and destiny, Jeremiah and Job are one; but even when we recognise the same thoughts it does not seem possible to say in what relation they stand to each other. (Compare with Job, Jer. ii. 24, xii. 1-6, xv. 18, xx. 14, xxxi. 30.)

The post-exilic date of the book seems to be confirmed by other considerations.

(a) The mention of the Satan does not occur in early literature—only in the late books Zechariah and Chronicles.

(b) The doctrine of angels is a late development.

(c) The Book of Job must be later than Ezek. xviii., says Cornill, for there the existence of the problem with which Job struggles (that of guiltless suffering) is flatly denied. The tentative way in which Ezekiel approaches the problem gives the impression that it had only just entered into the spiritual horizon of the prophets of Israel. (Ezekiel, 592 B.C.)

(d) There are affinities with Malachi (450 B.C.) (ii. 17, iii. 14), and the writers of the two books may have been contemporaries (Strahn).

(e) The language is relatively late and implies a mature stage of literary culture (Driver).

(f) The absence of any clear traces of the book's influence on Hebrew literature confirms this view (see Cornill). Job is noticeably absent from the list of famous men in the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus (xliv.). The neglect of such a work as Job would be impossible to understand if it had been in circulation when psalmists and prophets were pondering on the problems of life originated by misfortune. (But see Cheyne's argument on the other side, *Job and Solomon*, chapter xi.). Parallel passages (Jer. xx. 14-18; Job iii.) do not seem to decide anything,

though Job vii. 17 is generally accepted as a parody of Ps. viii. The eulogy of Wisdom (in Job xxviii.; Prov. viii.) may be paralleled, but the thought in Job goes farther than Proverbs. The writer of Job xxviii. expressly says that "the fear of God" is the only wisdom within human ken, but the writer of Proverbs does not touch on that point, (the conclusion Job reaches rather agrees with that of the late book Ecclesiastes, xii. 13).

(g) The profound thoughts in the Book of Job would have been "born out of due time," says Bradley, if the problems with which they deal had not been brought home to the hearts of thinkers only by familiarity with unexplained and unexplicable suffering, by long and painful musing over the mysteries and riddles of human life.

The author is unknown, but the book has been attributed to Job himself, Moses, Solomon, Elihu, the author of Ps. lxxxviii., Isaiah, Hezekiah, the author of Isa. xxxviii., Baruch, and many others. "No literature has so many great anonymous works as that of Israel. The religious life of this people was at certain periods very intense, and at these periods the spiritual energy of the nation expressed itself impersonally through men who forgot themselves, and were speedily forgotten in name by others" (Davidson).

NOTE C

ON THE IDEA OF THE SATAN

In a valuable note on this subject, Dr. James Hope Moulton warns us not to confound "Satan" with Angra Mainyu (enemy spirit) in the system of the Magi, for at his earliest appearance in Hebrew

literature among "the sons of God," he is an angel strictly subordinate to Yahweh, whose function it is to test men's pretensions to righteousness. (See *Treasure of the Magi*, chap. iv.) When Bradley describes the Satan as a malignant spirit, and Cheyne recognises him as "one who had once been at strife with Yahweh (based on Job xxi. 22), and had not quite lost his original pleasure in working evil," it is clear that this character is read in the light of the New Testament or Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

In every reference to the Satan in the Old Testament he is not an independent agent, but the opposer of men *because* he is the minister of God. From the earliest time the Hebrews had conceived their Divine King to be surrounded by a court of ministers, who went forth to execute His will on the earth. They bring the blessings, curses, and commands of Yahweh (Judg. v. 23; Gen. xxxii. 29). Apart from this duty and their human appearance, these beings are not conceived to be endowed with any character, though by virtue of their activity they may be said to "know all things that are in the earth" (2 Sam. xiv. 20). They simply act as God's mouthpiece and instrument. (In 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 the same act attributed to Satan in 1 Chron. xxi. 1 is attributed to God.) "The *function* of an angel so overshadows his *personality* that the Old Testament does not ask who or what the angel is, but what he does" (Robertson Smith, art. "Angels," *Encyc. Brit.*, ninth ed.). This doctrine of angels became more developed after the Exile, when the thought of the Divine majesty and holiness created a new sense of distance between God and His direct action with men. Zechariah is the earliest prophet to introduce orders and ranks among them (ii. 3,

iii. 1, 4). Part of their duty is to test and discipline men. For both of these offices they are said to "satan"—*i.e.*, withstand—men. (See Num. xxii. 22: the angel stood in Balaam's way "for an adversary against him"—Heb. "*to satan him.*") In Zechariah (iii.) and the Prologue to Job a distinctive name, "the Satan," is given to one of the angels. (This became a proper name, "Satan," in 1 Chron. xxi.) He is the Adversary or Accuser—the angel to whom that function is specially assigned. In Zechariah he appears as the official prosecutor (standing at the right hand of the accused) in the Divine court, and when his work is done, he disappears. In the Book of Job, he exercises very much the same office, and is allowed to become the instrument of the Divine discipline, but he still shares that identification with his function which characterises the angels of the Old Testament: rigidly subordinate to Heaven and only serving its interests. It is true that in both Zechariah and Job we perceive, for the first time, some betrayal of bias. In Job, the Satan shows a marked assiduity in his somewhat invidious office, for which he is reproached; and in Zechariah he is distinctly rebuked for his lack of sympathy with the Divine thought; but there is no antagonism between God and His servant. It does not appear either in Zechariah or Job that the Satan is in declared opposition to goodness (as in the spirit of evil in the Persian religion). He does not respond to the gracious intention of God towards men, and may show the beginnings of personal malevolence; but we see no more than the possibility of a moral fall in the Satan of the Old Testament. The "sons of God" among whom he stands are first mentioned in

Gen. vi. 1 (when they have relations with "the daughters of men," whose offspring are called *nephilim* (giants). The heavens are not clean in God's sight. He puts no trust in His servants and charges His angels with folly (Job iv. 18). This may explain the later development by which the servant of God came to be recognised as an evil spirit, hostile to God, and as one who tempted man, not to vindicate his disbelief in human goodness, but to seduce men from God.

NOTE D

ON THE IDEA OF AN AFTER-LIFE

I.

To estimate the value of the utterance in xix. 25, it is necessary to examine Job's earlier experience.

(a) His conception of Sheol (the abode of the dead) does not differ from that prevalent in the Old Testament. It is deep as heaven is high (xi. 8), with gates and bars (xvii. 16), a land of thick darkness (x. 21), prepared for the shades of all living (xxx. 23), good and bad, small and great (iii. 17, 18), in a state of semi-unconsciousness (iii. 13), from which there is no prospect of deliverance (x. 20), which knows no more of the secret of Divine wisdom than the living world (xxviii. 22); a kingdom where Death, "the king of terrors," rules alone (xviii. 14).

(b) In spite of the gloomy conception of the future awaiting him, Job dreamt of brighter things. In his desperate utterance, "Though he slay me" (xiii. 15), which implied the certainty of impending death, the words which followed seem to express a

glimmer of hope beyond the grave: "Yet will I wait for him." (This is denied by Cheyne, but Driver cannot eliminate the sense of waiting hopefully on the analogy of waiting in vi. 11, xiv. 14: *The Book of Job*.) But the hope is very dim. "There is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again [xiv. 7], but man is frail as a flower." Yet again his spirit rises to the thought that Sheol might be only a temporary stage on his journey. If he is to die under God's wrath, might he not believe that "he keepeth not his wrath for ever"? Might it not be possible that, after a period of estrangement from God in Sheol, He would remember him in mercy, open the gates, and restore him to fellowship with Him (xiv. 13)? If a man died, might he not live again (xiv. 14)? But death is the grim fact which stares him in the face. Nothing is left but the vindication of his character by those who survive him (xvi. 18).

(c) But what if God Himself should be his Vindicator (xvi. 19)? He himself will know nothing of it, but it comforts him to think that his character may one day be cleared by One whose dealings with him seemed to cast doubt upon it. It is this clue which Job follows until it emboldens him to rise to the great conviction that not only will God be his Vindicator, but that he himself will know it and live to see it after death in a vision of God which will atone for all he has suffered.

II.

(a) We should compare the rendering of Job's great utterance in the Authorised and Revised Versions:

A.V.

For I know *that* my redeemer liveth,
 And *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth :
 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*,
 Yet in my flesh shall I see God :
 Whom I shall see for myself,
 And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

R.V.¹

But I know that my redeemer liveth,
 And that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth :
 And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
 Yet from my flesh shall I see God :
 Whom I shall see for myself (margin, "on my side"),
 And mine eyes shall behold, and not another (margin, "not
 as a stranger").

The American Revisers translate the fourth line :

Then, without my flesh, shall I see God.

(b) The pronoun (in the Hebrew) in the first line is emphatic ("I know" without misgiving). The Redeemer (*Gōēl*) whom Job has in view is one who will establish his innocence, and the term is frequently used of God as the deliverer of His people out of captivity (Isa. xlix. 7, liv. 5, etc.). In human relations the "Goel" was the nearest blood relation, on whom it lay to perform certain duties to the deceased, especially to avenge the unjust shedding of blood (Num. xxxv. 19). Job dies, but his Vindicator lives after him—"stands up" as a witness (Deut. xix. 5), as a judge (Ps. xii. 5). He will stand up "at the last" either "as a last one to close the debate" (Isa. xlv. 6), or "as one coming after" (Eccles. iv. 16) "upon the earth (dust)"—i.e., the ground in which Job expects shortly to lie. "And after my skin hath been thus destroyed" (literally, "And after my skin which they have destroyed

¹ This version removes all words in italics, with significant additions.

[even] this ")—probably pointing to himself (Davidson)—"yet from my flesh shall I see God."

"From" = without or in. Davidson points out that the Hebrew preposition "from" has the same ambiguity as in English. When Regan says (in *King Lear*),

Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences, which I best thought it fit
To answer from our home,

her words most naturally, perhaps, suggest that she thought it best to answer *at* home, but her meaning is that she decided to answer when she was *away from* home. Job clearly used the word in that sense: see xi. 15, "from (without) spot;" xxviii. 4, "afar from." The verse as a whole means, "Before death I shall not see God, for I shall die under His afflicting hand, but when I have died I shall then see God" (Driver). The closing words make his affirmation even more emphatic, "for myself, with mine eyes—not through the eyes of another" (or, as margin, "when I see him he will not be a stranger, but the God of my past experience").

III.

There are three main views of this utterance.

(a) Job looks forward not to a future state but to the restoration of God's favour in the present life. But, everywhere else, Job regards himself as on the verge of the grave, and never adopts the attitude of his friends that God may yet reward him in the present life, (in spite of the actual *dénouement* of the story). This is his tone after the utterance in xix. 25, as well as before it. Almost his last words (before his vision) are, "I know that this will bring me unto death" (xxx. 23).

(b) Job simply repeats his former faith (xvi. 18) in stronger language, that God will vindicate his character after his death, without referring to any consequent pleasure of his own. If his faith had been more than that, says Cheyne, it would have affected the rest of the story, and not been ignored either by the friends or in the answer out of the storm. But the friends are standing on much lower spiritual ground than Job and fail to appreciate any of his lofty thoughts, and we may surely include this venture of faith in the "things that were right" which gained the Divine commendation (xlii.). The rest of Job's story gives evidence that this declaration did make a difference to his outlook, for, though it is not again referred to, he is no longer obsessed by the thought of death or of God as his enemy.

(c) The great thought that filled Job's imagination was that God would appear to manifest his innocence and that he should see Him in peace and reconciliation (Davidson). Traditional interpretation has read too much meaning into his words, and if it is wrong to say that Job only contemplates a spiritual vision it is equally wrong to say that he expects to see God, invested with a new body. But, whilst the ideas of Old Testament saints regarding the after-life were always obscure, we should take Job's venture at its true value. He had previously asserted that his witness in heaven would vindicate him after death (xvi. 19), and that kindled the thought that he would be permitted to see it (I, yes, I, shall see—Peake). Not only will his character be cleared, but he will know that it is. Farther than that Job does not go. He is entirely absorbed in the thought of seeing God and does not attempt to fill out an idea which

only became definite in after-time. We can hardly speak of a doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament, but the religious sense of Job and the psalmists (xvi. 9) carried them farther than they knew into the real ground of faith in the immortality of the whole personal being of man. Immortality is the corollary of religion. The sense of communion with God is itself a pledge that it cannot suddenly be interrupted by death, but must be carried on to a fuller perfection. The God of Abraham is not the God of the dead but of the living.

NOTE E

ON JUDGING THE BOOK AS A WHOLE

At the outset of this enquiry we need to take to heart the strong language of Davidson deprecating the tendency to go to extreme critical conclusions: "One of the latest writers (Studer) on the book has found it necessary to amputate every limb from the poem, leaving it a mere trunk (consisting of chapters iii.-xxxi.), and even this trunk is so misshapen that its shoulders are found in the region of its bowels." (Studer brings forward chapters xxix. and xxx. to the beginning.) The integrity of the Book of Job is disputed by most writers, but it cannot be said that their decision closes the question. Writers of such repute as Cornill, Budde, Briggs, Cox, etc., have strong arguments on the other side which appear even more convincing to the present writer. Davidson admits that, with the exception of the speeches of Elihu, there is no other part of the book against which, as a whole, serious objection can be brought (*Job*, Cambridge

Bible : Introduction, chapter iv.). The main points in debate are :

1. The Prologue and Epilogue.
2. Chapter xxvii. 7 to end, and its connection with chapter xxviii.
3. The speeches of Elihu (xxxii.-xxxvii.).

I.

THE PROLOGUE (I., II.) AND EPILOGUE (XLII. 7-17)

It is suggested that these form no part of the body of the Book of Job on the following grounds :

(a) They are in prose, whilst the rest of the book is poetical.

(b) The Divine names differ in the prose and poetical sections.

(c) Sacrifices are regarded as an essential part of religion in prose section—not elsewhere.

(d) In the prose section the Satan appears as the cause of Job's trial, but in the body of the book the cause is understood to be due to God Himself.

(e) The Divine judgment in the Epilogue which represents Job's speeches as "right" does not agree with the Divine censure of Job in the answer out of the storm, nor with the part taken by the friends in the debate.

(f) The restoration of Job seems to fall back upon the old doctrine of compensation.

It is suggested (chiefly on these grounds) that the Prologue and Epilogue formed the beginning and end of a people's Book of Job, the central part of which has been lost (Strahn, etc.). These objections have been answered by Davidson, Cornill, etc.

(a) All narrative in Hebrew is in prose (even in the body of the poem, xxxiii. 1-5, xxxviii. 1).

(b) The Divine names are appropriate to the times represented in the book. The author (an Israelite) employs the name usual in Israel (Yahweh), whilst the speakers whom he introduces use the Divine names appropriate to the patriarchal times for which they stand (El Shaddai=God Almighty). But the rule is not always maintained. The same authorship throughout the book is disclosed by the Israelitish name (Yahweh) being allowed to escape from Job's mouth on more than one occasion (i. 21, xii. 9; also in the body of the poem, xxxviii. 1).

(c) The sacrifice referred to in Prologue and Epilogue is the patriarchal burnt offering, not the technical sin-offering in the Priestly Code of later days (Peake), and Job acts as priest for his own household, in keeping with early usage. But in the body of the book there is a mention of priests (xii. 19, R.V.).

(d) The function of the Satan is clearly defined in the Prologue, where he is subordinate to God and only acts under Divine authority. The explanation of Job's calamities is the secret of the author alone, and the whole story of Job is concerned, not with the mystery of evil, but the mystery of Providence (see Davidson, *Job*, Introduction, p. xxxii).

(e) Peake favours the view that in an earlier Book of Job another type of debate came between the present Prologue and Epilogue, which the author cut out in order to insert his own.

In the earlier dialogue the friends were guilty of the "folly" of Job's wife, whilst Job still maintained his piety and resignation. But we know nothing

of the existence of such a dialogue, and we must take the book as we find it. There is nothing psychologically improbable in the breaking down of Job's composure under trial, and we have every reason to believe that his bold facing of the facts of life as he saw them was more in keeping with a true religious spirit than the attempt of his friends to gloze over them. The "folly" of the friends consists in maintaining a theory of Providence at the expense of truth. This is finally condemned. The "rightness" of Job consists in his consistent appeal to truth, and it is for this that he is finally commended.

(f) It cannot be said that the happy conclusion of the book maintains the old doctrine of compensation, for this would rather substantiate the Satan's view of religion as a refined form of selfishness than Job's spirituality. If the drama be the trial of the righteous, it must come to some conclusion, and though Job only expected his vindication after death it was impossible for the author to confirm a hope which was not established in his day. "The author had no stage for concluding his drama on the other side. The religious truth contained in Job's anticipation the author causes to be realised, though he does it on this side of death" (Davidson).

On these and other grounds the Prologue and Epilogue appear to be indispensable to Job's story. "Without the Prologue the whole of the following speeches would remain suspended in the air; the reader would be entirely at a loss how he ought to take Job's asseverations of innocence, and might even at last be tempted to side with the friends against Job. In order to grasp the whole tragedy of the situation, and in order to be just to the hero and rightly to

understand his obstinacy—almost bordering on blasphemy—and with this his unswerving adherence to God, the reader must know the truth of the matter from the mouth of God Himself” (Cornill).

II.

XXVII. 7 TO END AND ITS CONNECTION WITH XXVIII.

(a) In chapter xxvii. Job undertakes to teach his friends what they had already affirmed (*i.e.*, the certain fate of the wicked), and, in doing this, he goes back upon his own previous sweeping view of the prosperity of the wicked (xxi.). Job is not capable, says Peake, of such an intellectual somersault. Chapter xxvii. 7 to end has been assigned to Zophar (Kennicott, etc.), which supplies the missing third speech we expected from him.

(b) It is possible, however, to explain Job's concession to the teaching of his friends. Even if he is not simply quoting the views of his friends (“ye say”), as he does elsewhere (xii. 2, xxi. 16, margin), he may be applying their doctrine to themselves. They have held the lot of the evildoer before him as a mirror—now he holds it before them. Cornill takes xxvii. 11-23 as directed to the friends, “whom Job confounds with their own words, in this way welding a piece of recantation into a weapon against them.”

(c) There is still another possible explanation. In a calmer frame of mind, Job corrects his former one-sided opinion regarding the immunity of the wicked from punishment (xxi.) and concedes that judgment *in the long run* does overtake them. Cheyne says this is very unnatural. How can he do

this without confessing that he has been completely in error? But far too much is made of the extravagances of Job, says Davidson. He never said anything so absurd as that the wicked are always happy; it was enough for his purpose to give instances of their happiness. His contention (in xxi. and xxiv.) was that in God's rule of the world no clear distinction was to be observed between the lot of the righteous and that of the wicked; but this does not deny, out and out, the doctrine of retribution (see Davidson, *Job*, Introduction, p. xxxviii). He has answered negatively, before, what the fate of the wicked is *not*; now, free from the heat of controversy, he will give his view of what their fate *is* (Genung).

(d) The connection between chapters xxvii. and xxviii. has still to be explained. The calm monologue on Wisdom (xxviii.) does not seem to reflect Job's mood and is not afterwards sustained; moreover, it begins with the word "for" (not "surely"—see R.V. margin), implying a strict logical connection with the preceding words which, Peake declares, cannot be found. Yet, it seems too much to say (with Driver) that "there is an imperfect psychological basis even for a temporary recovery of calmness in Job."

1. Many scholars regard this chapter as a separate composition, with no direct bearing on the problem of Job; but the present writer accepts the judgment of Driver that "it is hardly possible that such a noble and characteristic passage can have been inserted by a later hand" (*Introduction to Literature of Old Testament*).

2. Duhm explains it by supposing that the piece began with the refrain "Where shall wisdom be

found?" which leads naturally to the words, "For there is a mine for silver, etc."

3. Chapter xxviii. establishes the indecisive character of the whole of the controversy so far, and proves the utter helplessness and resourcelessness both of the friends who have been silenced and also of the triumphant Job (Cornill).

4. But does it not follow naturally? asks Genung. Having portrayed the extreme of unwisdom (xxvii.), with which wickedness was identified, it is natural that Job should now speak of its contrast—the true wisdom. Man cannot see as God sees, cannot reach absolute truth; but there is a wisdom for him which points to the absolute good as the needle points to the pole—*i.e.*, the fear of God.

5. The present writer thinks that he can discern a close logical connection between chapters xxvii. and xxviii. (see Chapter XII. in this book). Job cannot verify the moral judgment (described in xxvii. 20-23), "for" (xxviii.), though you may find gold, you cannot fathom God's mind; but it is left to man to conform his life to the only practical wisdom, which is the fear of God.

III.

THE SPEECHES OF ELIHU (XXXII.-XXXVII.)

There can be no reasonable doubt, says Driver, that these speeches are no part of the original poem of Job. But, whilst other authorities can be quoted who make a reasonable claim to their inclusion (Cornill, Genung, Briggs, Godet, Moulton, Cox, Budde, etc.), it seems to the present writer that the question is still open to private judgment. Bradley and Gibson have "a reasonable doubt," but they recognise the value of Elihu's contribution.

The main objections to the inclusion of these speeches in the original version of Job are the following:

(a) He is not referred to in the Prologue and Epilogue.

(b) The opening words of the Divine answer (xxxviii. 2) refer not to Elihu, but to Job as the last speaker.

(c) Elihu uses words which rarely or never occur elsewhere.

(d) Job makes no reply to Elihu.

(e) Elihu makes no original contribution of any value, and the speeches can be removed without disturbing the story.

The main conclusion is that the speeches of Elihu were added to the original work because their author felt that the friends ought to have made more of their case. Indirectly, his criticism extends to the whole cast of the book, for he ignores the teaching of the Prologue as definitely as he censures Job (Delitzsch). To these arguments the following reply embodies the contention that Elihu plays a vital part in Job's story, and harmonises with its original setting:

(a) It may be said, at the outset, that we have no version of Job without the speeches of Elihu. The Septuagint Version has four hundred verses less than our version, but it does not exclude Elihu. The Septuagint Version is based upon Hebrew MSS. at least 1,000 years older than any which we now possess (Driver, *Introduction to the Book of Job*).

(b) The argument that Elihu does not appear in the Prologue has little value (Davidson). He was not one of Job's friends, but an independent observer. He is not in the Epilogue because he has

not incurred "the anger of the Lord," but simply played his part in preparing for the Divine revelation (see *f*).

(*c*) If it is Elihu's rôle to prepare Job for a Divine revelation we can understand the interval between Job's last words and the Divine answer. It is clearly Job, not Elihu, who has "darkened counsel without knowledge" (xxxviii. 2), but we are not shut up to the conclusion that "Job's words have scarcely died away before the Divine intervention takes place" (Gibson). The participle "darkening" (xxxviii. 2) may seem to imply that the Divine speaker broke in upon Job when in the act of darkening, but Davidson warns us that it is rather to strain the argument from the use of the participle to say that this *must* be the meaning (see Davidson, note on xxxviii. 2).

(*d*) A difference in style is noticeable in the speeches of Elihu. It is said to be more laboured, an evident attempt to "galvanise the debate into life" (Peake), to be strongly marked with Aramaic expressions and words foreign to the rest of the book. Peake, however, agrees that Budde's investigations have greatly modified this argument from language. Cornill comes to the decision that the conclusions of Budde have practically dismissed the difficulty of language (*Introduction to Canonical Old Testament*, "Job," p. 426). And who should use Aramaic words, asks Cox, if not the one speaker who is of Aramaic origin? ("Elihu . . . of the kindred of Ram," xxxii. 2.) Although Ram is not equivalent to Aram (Syria), Elihu is certainly represented as an Aramacean Arab (Delitzsch).

(*e*) The reason why Job makes no reply to Elihu may be accounted for by the attitude of this new

speaker. Peake maintains that the severe tone of Elihu (in xxxiv. 16) shows that he charges Job, as the friends had done, with the sins which had caused all his trouble. Budde strongly protests against this view. It is what he has heard Job say which has roused Elihu ("because he justified himself rather than God," xxxii. 3), not by prejudging his past life. In every reference to Job's sin he simply charges him with a wrong disposition under trial and with rebellious speeches, against which there can be no reply from one who feels the force of the rebuke.

(f) We now come to the one important question : What does Elihu stand for, and does his contribution make any material difference to the story of Job ?

1. Up to chapter xxxi. (Job's last words) no solution of Job's problem has been reached. It is imperative that it should be so, says Peake, since the lesson he has to learn is to trust God, even though he does not understand Him. No doubt this is one of the explanations of his story, for the Prologue is hidden from him, and the speeches of Jehovah are not to provide a key. Yet, because Job is never to know that his sufferings have been a special trial of character, that is no reason why he should not know any of the uses of adversity. Eliphaz held a clue when he spoke of the "chastening of the Almighty" (v. 17), and that thought was capable of rich development. We need not assume (with Budde and Cornill) that Job, though outwardly blameless, had a lurking spiritual pride from which he had to be purged ; we have only to leave room for some friendly consoling message that would dispose the sufferer to believe that he had not lost his place in the mind of God. This was Elihu's function.

Job had ventured to prescribe the way in which God might appear to him (ix. 34, 35; xiii. 20, 21), which were impossible conditions, apart from an Incarnation. It is at this point that Elihu seems to answer to Job's appeal, as far as any human being can do it. The verbal agreement of Job's request (ix. 34, xiii. 21) with Elihu's response (xxxiii. 7) is unmistakable. Elihu smooths the transition from man to God, preparing the way for the Divine message.

2. Davidson has pointed out the greatest difficulty in the way of considering these speeches a later insertion (*Job*, Introduction, p. li). Elihu either knew about the original cause of Job's trouble in the Prologue, or he did not. If he did not know, his position is quite natural; but if he were a reader of the book, the way in which he completely ignores the Prologue, with its view of affliction, and substitutes his own is extraordinary. In this view, he takes up a critical position which not only doubts the conception of the "righteous man" suffering for no sin of his own, but cannot even admit that God might afflict a man for no other moral intention than to try his sincerity; and he has dovetailed these critical notions into the text with such amazing success that they do not destroy the unity of the book!

3. What, then, is the value of Elihu's contribution? According to Peake, he occupies substantially the same standpoint as the friends, says little more than they have said already, and said better; but Davidson admits (in spite of his critical doubts) that the book would be decidedly poorer without this contribution. Even Dillon (*Sceptics of the Old Testament*), whilst disparaging Elihu's style, describes him as a first-class theologian. Cheyne denies the contention of Briggs that Elihu prepares the way

for the Divine interposition, but says, at the same time: "The Elihu sections express in Old Testament language the great truth expressed by St. Paul (1 Cor. xii. 32): 'When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world'" (*Job and Solomon*, chapter xii.). Cornill summarises the value of Elihu's contribution:

(a) He points out the danger of being blinded, under the influence of isolated cases of apparent injustice, to the love and provident wisdom of God as expressed in the regular course of the world.

(b) If God does not grant man's petitions, that is not because He will not or cannot hear, but because man does not appeal to Him in the right way (xxxv. 9, 10).

(c) Above all, Elihu gives a teleological explanation of the suffering of the righteous, recognising in it an instrument of education in God's hands: Suffering leads man to self-knowledge; if man misinterprets the educative character of suffering, he thereby commits a grave sin. . . . If, however, he recognises its true character, and takes it to heart, the suffering becomes to him a source of infinite blessing, the highest practical proof of the Divine love towards him. This furnishes the only solution of the problem which can be given from the Old Testament standpoint, and, leaving out the hope of a life after death (xix. 25), no grander explanation or one richer in consoling power was possible (Cornill, *Introduction to Canonical Books of Old Testament*).

NOTE F

ON THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER TO THE BOOK OF JOB

1. "We need a second part of Job, or at least a third speech of Jehovah, which could, however, only be given by some Hebrew poet who had drunk at the fountains of the Fourth Gospel. Failing these, the reader must supply what is necessary for himself—a better compensation to Job for his agony than the Epilogue provides, and a more touching, and not less Divine, theophany. This Christianity will enable him to do" (Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*, chapter xiv.).¹

This added chapter has yet to be written, and we can only suggest the materials for an answer.

2. If the story of Job were concerned with the mystery of evil, it would be necessary to regard that problem in the light of the New Testament, where the powers of darkness are seen in personal opposition to the powers of light; but we have seen that Job's problem was created by the mystery of Providential dealings with him, and we are only concerned here with the Christian answer to that.

3. Christianity does not clear up the mystery of sorrow to the understanding, but removes all possible doubt of the character of God. Greek and Hebrew wisdom could not do that, but there came a glorious bridal day when they became united: for the highest conception of the wise men of Israel

¹ If we cannot accept the consolation of Christianity, we have nothing better to fall back upon than the *Consolation of Philosophy*, which cheered Boëthius, fifth century A.D. (Universal Library, Routledge.)

was that personification of wisdom¹ which bridged the gulf between Jewish and Greek ideas, preparing the way for the revelation of the incarnate "Word" who dwelt among us (John i. 1-14; Heb. i. 1).

The cry of the human heart that it might meet and see God as a man (Job ix. 32) was answered in the advent of Jesus Christ. This advent repudiated all dark thoughts of a dualism in God—any conflict between His justice and mercy ("I and my Father are one"—John x. 30). The "daysman" was no intervening umpire, but God, touched with our feeling (Heb. iv. 15). Jesus Christ reveals the consistency of the Divine purpose in creation, providence, and redemption.

He who makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. v. 45), does not confuse moral distinctions. God, "our Father," cares for all His children with a love which pursues them through all the tracks of their experience. (Read *The Hound of Heaven*, Francis Thompson.)

4. "What is man?" Man is made in the Divine image (Matt. xxii. 21), and the representative Man ("the Son of man") restores the Divine likeness. (Read the answer to this question in Heb. ii. 5-10, and in Pascal's *Thoughts*, section ii.)

Christianity confirms the truth that life is not an adventure, but a discipline. It is a trial (1 Cor. x. 13), a yoke (Matt. xi. 29), a chastening (Heb. xii. 5-12), for the perfecting of the human spirit; and we are not to explain suffering as a sign of judgment even when we cannot account for it in any other way. (The hasty judgment of Job's friends, repeated

¹ Prov. viii. and the Wisdom of Solomon.

centuries after, is definitely rebuked in Luke xiii. 1-5 and John ix. 1-3).

"We have far better grounds than were given to Job to believe in the wisdom and goodness of the Divine power which orders our lives. . . . We know a good deal more about the wonders of nature . . . that it is a system of law and order which has no caprice in it—not only an order of existence, but an order of development which, though it cannot clear away our difficulties as to the existence of pain, yet suggests a purpose which such pain may subserve, both for the individual and the race. Christianity whispers in the ear of men that the gain of each is the gain of all, and the loss of each is the loss of all" (Caird, *Lay Sermons*: "The Faith of Job").

There is a real sympathy between man and nature, and those who have an ear to hear can catch the undertone of pain with which the whole creation groans, waiting for that redemption which she can only hope to share with man's true sovereignty (Rom. viii. 19-22).

St. Francis d'Assisi is the best expositor of Job v. 23: "The beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee" (see Sabatier's *Life of Francis*).

5. Christianity teaches the divinest use of suffering. "If the Jew was to accept a Messiah who was to lead a life of sorrow and abasement, and to be crucified between two thieves, it was necessary that it should be somewhere or other distinctly taught that virtue was not always rewarded here, and that therefore no argument could be drawn from affliction and ignominy against the person who suffered it" (Mozley). Job is in this sense prophetic of Christ,

inasmuch as the very conception of a righteous man enduring calamities, not so much for his own sake as for the world's, is a bold hypothesis which could only in Christ be made good (Cheyne); (see also Wisdom of Solomon, chapter ii.).

If Job suffered in order that the sorrowful might be comforted, he is answered by a message which lies at the heart of Christianity—the message of the Cross, of Him who saved others, but would not save Himself. Jesus Christ is the Vindicator (*Gōēl*) of all wrongs (see Luke xviii. 1-8, and F. W. Robertson's sermon on "Realising the Second Advent," December 2, 1849). But the voluntary suffering of Christ throws most light on the experience of the vicarious sufferer (Isa. liii.), and it is in this deeper sense, unknown to Job, that we can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

6. Christianity dissipates the gloom of Sheol. When we compare the precarious hope of Job for the future with the audacity of Christian faith, his forebodings with the fearless joy of common people in the face of death, robbing it of its sting and victory, we know that a great fact stands between him and us. (Read chapter xxv. in George Adam Smith's *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. i., book iv., on "An Old Testament Believer's Sick-bed; or, The Difference Christ has made.")

We can share Ruskin's feeling when he wrote: "I have the profoundest sympathy with St. Thomas, and would fain put all his questions over again, and twice as many more: 'We know not whither thou goest.' That Father's house—where is it?" (*Fors Clavigera*, vol. ii., letter 27). But we can build upon the comfort of Christ's words, "If it were not so, I would have told you," confirmed by the Easter fact

and the Easter message: "Why seek the living among the dead?"¹

7. We still have to admit, with Job, our ignorance of the deeper things of God. There is a reverent agnosticism which honours God far more than a dogmatism which claims understanding of all His ways. "True religion goes with that thorough intellectual integrity which does not seek to blink any difficulty or to hide from itself any reasonable ground of doubt" (Caird).

We have read the Book of Job in vain if we still seek first to bolster up our own views before examining them in the light of experience. "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all" (Coleridge).

But against the contention that God is unknowable, the Christian sets his own experience, and that of the Christian Church, which declares that men can and do hold communion with God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and that he who makes this venture of faith finds it justified. It is a matter not of scientific proof, but of spiritual experience. For him eternal life is a present possession, and he is content to believe that, in spite of all the limitations of knowledge.

It is this experience which enables us to say with St. John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it is not yet manifest what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2). For the last word of the Christian

¹ Luke xxiv. 5. This was an angel's message. The New Testament confirms their ministry to man (Matt. iv. 11, xviii. 10; Luke xvi. 22; Acts xii. 11; Heb. i. 14; etc.), but in strict subordination to Jesus Christ. (See St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians.)

must always be : " Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again ? For of him, and through him, and unto him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen."

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